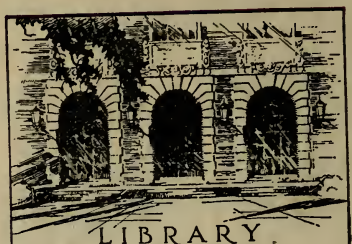
823
153m
v.1



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS
823
W153m
V.1

MR. WARRENNE,

THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

[Wallace, Ellen]

MR. WARRENNE,

THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "CONSTANCE D'OYLEY,"
"MARGARET CAPEL," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.
1848.

LONDON:

W. OSTELL, PRINTER, HART STREET,

BLOOMSBURY SQUARE.

W153m
v.1

INTRODUCTION.

And so with trees beset
Was all the place, and hawthorn hedges knet,
That lyf was none walking there forbye,
That might within scarce any night espy.
And on the smal greene twistis sat
The lytel sweet nyghtingales, and sung
So loud and clere the hymns consecrate
To lovis use, now soft, now loud among.
James I. of Scotland.—The King's Quhair.

The village of Erlsmede, about forty miles from London, was rather remarkable for the beauty of its situation and that of the country round.

It was built upon high ground—so high, that the tower of the old church was a sort of

landmark for many miles. But the situation of the village was not too exposed;—it was sheltered on all sides by trees of unusual size and antiquity. The prettiest lane in all the country was to be found leading out of this little village, down to the high London-road. The hedges were deep thickets, always untrimmed, of hawthorn and hazel, overgrown with many a drooping plant of woodbine and wild rose: while here and there a rough oak lifted its head above the bushes, and stretched its gnarled boughs over the road. The lane was always shady—always quiet—it was a slow and long ascent, though winding, and there was the choice of another road, for the few carts and carriages bound to Erlsmede. The sun might chequer the path, and the thrushes sing in the deep shade of the hawthorns for many hours in the day, without a witness.

One bright morning, early in June, two little girls of ten and twelve years old, were slowly loitering down the lane. They were

drest with great simplicity, in black frocks, and broad straw hats, from which depended long black ribbons,—they carried a little wicker basket between them, in which were a few wild flowers. They were both lovely. The eldest with a brilliant complexion—bright contrasts of white and deepest rose—hair of the darkest brown plainly parted from the forehead, deep gray eyes of that steady and subdued brilliancy rarely seen but in the south of Ireland, and which more than any others might deserve the epithet of *starlike,* and a figure tall, slight, and full of a graceful energy:—the younger girl, less slender, fairer, with a profusion of tangled golden hair hanging over her glowing face, and a beautiful and soft simplicity in her gestures. They paused, and the eldest untied the hat of the younger girl, and lifted it off her brow.

"How hot you are, Alice."

"And you too, Maud," said the younger girl, without turning her sleepy hazel eyes towards her sister—instead of which she passed

her fingers with a quick tremulous motion across her forehead. She was blind.

"We shall soon be cool here. Do you feel the wind?" asked Maud.

"Yes; how soft it is. There is some honeysuckle close to us—look!"

"Where? I do not see it—oh yes! just behind you—there, I have bent down the branch: will you like to gather it?"

"Poor mamma," said the child, pausing in the midst of her occupation—"she was so fond of honeysuckle—do you remember, Maud, this time last year, we used to go and search the hedges for a piece that was blown—when she was so ill?"

She stopped, not crying, for she never shed tears; but pale and trembling.

"Let us sit down," said Maud—"it is mossy here, under this oak."

Her large dazzling eyes were swimming in tears, but she had learned already the difficult lesson which all women must learn sooner or

later—to control their own feelings for the sake of others. Alice trembling as a person trembles in an ague, leaned against her sister.

"Hark!" said Maud, trying to divert her sister, "do you hear that thrush?—does not he sing sweetly? such a merry looking fellow! would not Leonard like to have a shot at him!"

"I hear something else," said Alice, raising her head, "horse's feet—two horses. People so seldom come this way."

"No, dear Ally, I hear nothing; if you will hold the basket, I will gather some of those roses. No, don't try to touch them, you will run the thorns into your fingers!"

But so daintily did Alice finger the prickly stems, that she gathered one rose after another without hurting herself. Meanwhile, for she was never mistaken, two horsemen came trotting rapidly towards the girls.

"Ah, Maud! the horses! keep close!"

cried Alice, pressing to her sister. Alice was very timid, for she had not been born blind.

But though the two girls stood close up to the hedge, one of the horses, coming quickly upon them, shyed all across the lane, and then became unmanageable. Such a perversely restive animal had never come out of a stable since the days of Bucephalus.

Maud, with a sudden energy that supplied the place of strength, swung her sister a few feet up the bank, and held her there with one hand, while she looked bravely round at the threatened danger; her slender foot firmly planted forward, and her lovely face all in a glow, partly from alarm, and partly from the exertion of her attitude. Meantime the horse leaped in the air, stood on his hind legs, ran round in circles, and sometimes kicked out at a large Newfoundland dog, which, to complete the confusion, flew, barking and bounding, round the restive animal.

"Call your dog off!" cried Maud, waving

her hand to the rider, who seemed to sit as comfortably as if he were in an arm chair, and who rather encouraged the gambols of his four-footed friend, by spurring him repeatedly.

Alice, pale and silent from excess of terror, clung to her sister.

"Nelson, down!" said the horseman in a quick, sharp tone. The dog crouched almost at the feet of the sisters.

It was now the fancy of the horse to stand stock-still. The rider, who might have been about eighteen years old, dismounted carelessly—picked up the basket, which Maud had dropped, and presented it to her. The other rider, a few years older than himself, who had prudently kept back his horse during the scuffle, now rode slowly forward.

"Maud—the horses?" said Alice, enquiringly, stretching out her hands.

"Quite still—standing in the road—don't be frightened any more," said Maud, helping her sister down from the bank.

The young man, who had dismounted, stood with one arm thrown over his horse's neck, watching the children attentively; Alice still trembling—Maud holding both her hands.

"Were *you* frightened, eh?" he asked, in a clear, quick tone, looking earnestly at Maud.

"Yes—for my sister—she is blind," said Maud, turning her large eyes straight upon the stranger's face.

"Good," said he, quickly. Then, after a short pause, "*Is* she blind?"

"Yes," said Maud, sorrowfully.

"You don't say so—may I have this?" he asked, taking a bit of honeysuckle from the basket.

"If you please," replied Maud, colouring: and then, taking her sister's hand, she led her quietly away, without again regarding the horsemen.

"I say, O'Neill," said the young man, mounting his horse.

"Well?"

"I like her—the tallest; she is very pretty —the sort of girl I should like to marry."

"If she were not so young," said the other, riding forward.

"She will grow older, I conclude," said the first speaker, drily, as he fastened the honeysuckle into his button-hole. "There is a little of the lion about her; but I think I rather like that.

MR. WARRENNE,

THE MEDICAL PRACTITIONER.

CHAPTER I.

Of gentle blood (part shed in honour's cause
While yet in Britain honour had applause)
Each parent sprung—
* * * * *
Stranger to civil or religious rage
The good man walked innoxious through his age:
No courts he saw, no suits would ever try,
Nor dared an oath, nor hazarded a lie.

Pope.

Mr. Warrenne was a Medical Practitioner. This term is of comparatively modern date; and is applied to the Pariahs of the medical

profession. Men who are compelled to unite the acquirements of a physician with those of a surgeon. Impossible to be more highly educated, impossible to be worse remunerated than the medical practitioner. In a country where wealth is the sole standard of social position, and where talent is comparatively disregarded, the condition of the medical practitioner, and still more, the condition of his family, is far from enviable. He may enjoy the confidence of his patients; he may possibly be admitted to the tables of the higher classes in the neighbourhood; but his family holds an uncertain and slippery position, the most trying to the manners and teazing to the temper that can be conceived. No gentleman ought to enter this profession. He is galled and wounded at every step. He finds success evade his grasp like the rainbow, unless he can descend to a multitude of wretched frauds, which no gentleman can ever learn to practice. And a large number of medical practitioners,

not being gentlemen, he finds the greater part of his practice swept out of his hands by artifices which excite his disdain, but which equally empty his pocket. For Mr. Warrenne was a gentleman. His family traced their origin to one of those hardy pirates of the Mediterranean, who founded some of the oldest French and Italian houses.

One of his ancestors had served in the court of Charlemagne, and it had been his particular duty to hand the inkstand to that accomplished monarch, when he affixed (literally) his sign-manual to papers of state. A descendant of this man had migrated to England, after the capture of Robert the Conqueror's son, and another Warrenne had brought from the Holy Land the crest, (the panther's head erased,) which was in use in the family at the present day.

But Mr. Warrenne's great grandfather ran through every acre that belonged to the family, and so put a finishing stroke to the gentility of

the house. Mr. Warrenne's father was recommended by a relation to engage in the medical profession, and in an evil hour he complied. He had enjoyed a flourishing practice in the neighbourhood, where his son now followed his steps. But various causes had contributed to diminish the number of Mr. Warrenne's patients. Some old and staunch friends had died; but many families had withdrawn from his care, some because his politics varied from their standard of excellence, and others because his religious views were neither factious nor factitious enough to meet the exact wishes of the more enthusiastic among his patients; for it is a recognised fact that a medical man may think only about his pills, and is not permitted to form or to express an opinion on the two most important interests of mankind—*for*, we live in a free country.

It was comfortable to Mr. Warrenne to reflect that he had never lost a patient except from a cause that was honourable to

himself; but this consolation did not put money in his purse.

Happily, he had enough to subsist upon, even though fortune had played him a more slippery turn—and this made him unpopular. People were very angry when they found that they could not starve the man, do what they would.

He had four children—the eldest was a surgeon in the Company's service—the second was about to accept a situation as clerk in a merchant's house—the two youngest were girls, already introduced to the reader; but now, where my story begins, almost grown to women.

His wife, a woman of remarkable beauty, had died of consumption many years back, under singular and painful circumstances. Her disorder had appeared to be arrested, and Mr. Warrenne had left her for a few days without hesitation, to transact some business of importance in London. The night before his return

she died. Alice, the youngest child was sleeping with her, and on waking in the morning, found her mother a corpse. The terror struck her blind; but her blindness was not immediate, she was attacked by amaurosis, and in a few weeks was deprived of sight. There was not a ray of hope for her recovery: all the skill of science can avail nothing in that form of the complaint. A few years afterwards, and another affliction visited the family. The eldest son who was preparing for orders, and who had gained high honours at college, was seized with a brain fever, and carried to the grave at the end of a few weeks. Mr. Warrenne never mentioned his name, and any allusion that might suggest his memory, would render him grave and silent for hours. When his wife died, he withdrew at once from all attempt at society—he had experienced the unsatisfactory nature of their irregular and embarrassed interchange of visits with the neighbours—and he was too glad to put a stop to it at once. His beautiful

daughters, therefore, stood a great chance of remaining on his hands—they went to no balls, and gave no dinners—but Mr. Warrenne liked their company—and he had laid up some money that he might not be under the necessity of selling them.

But they were very happy considering. Mr. Warrenne had given them an education very much above their station—and this circumstance, together with the old pirate blood that would sometimes stir in their veins, prevented their being quite so humble as their position required. The retired hosiers on the hill, often remarked that those Warrennes did not seem to know their places—but this must have been partly a conjecture of the hosiers, because they merely saw the Warrennes passing to church, or walking in the evenings among the surrounding lanes.

They lived in an old white house roofed with tiles—which stood in a sort of court-yard with large chestnut trees overshadowing the

front windows. A passage paved with coloured tiles ran through the house, and terminated in a door, half glass, which opened into the garden; a long straight strip of ground divided by an old wall from the orchard, a square plot of the deepest and greenest turf, was bordered by a belt of trees and evergreens, that served as a screen to divide the kitchen garden from that appropriated to flowers. Never was such a wall for all kinds of choice fruit—peaches, nectarines, apricots, and the finer kinds of plumbs—never was such a gay parterre as the border beneath that south wall—never were peas and strawberries, and all sorts of vegetables and fruit in earlier profusion than in that garden. And it was tended by a very singular image of old Adam—a humpbacked German, who having followed Mr. Warrenne home from Leyden many years back, when he had given himself a six week's holiday to the Continent, had remained a fixture in the family ever since, and was likely so to continue as long as he lived.

The other remarkable character on the premises was Mr. Warrenne's white horse, who is destined to play an important, though unconscious, part in this history.

CHAPTER II.

A lady, like to Juno in her state,
Upon the air her golden tresses streaming,
And with celestial eyes of azure beaming;
* * * * *
But through the rigid pride and pomp unbending
Of beauty and of haughtiness,
Sparkled a flattery sweet and condescending:
And, from her inmost bosom sent,
Came accents of most wondrous gentleness;
Officious and intent
To thrall my soul in soft imprisonment.

From the Italian of Guidi.

But though the Warrennes did not give dinners, they had one or two friends. The Creswicks, whose grounds were only divided from their garden by a narrow lane, were their

nearest neighbours; and though they employed Mr. Warrenne in a medical capacity, were disposed to be courteous to his family.

Colonel Creswick was a frightful little man, with an immense red nose, and a row of long yellow teeth, which he was always displaying. He intended his gestures to be very insinuating; and it is possible that a strong-minded person might contemplate him without a shudder. Mrs. Creswick was very tall, and so extremely thin that it was astonishing how she contrived to exist. Her hair, once as black as night, was now perfectly grey; her eyebrows, drawn straight above her dark blue eyes, still retained their raven hue. Her forehead was wide and noble; her nose very thin, and of a bad outline; her mouth firm, with thin, flexible lips, always fast closed in repose. While you spoke to her, those searching eyes were fixed steadily on your face, watching every shade of expression; but you could never detect a movement on her part which seemed to denote that

she breathed. It was almost terrible: it was the face of an accusing spirit; and a person would be very bold to hazard a falsehood beneath the gaze of that earnest countenance.

The Colonel and herself were always scrupulously polite to each other. He called her madam—sometimes dearest madam, and bent his hideous face sideways, like a bird, when he addressed her; and she replied in few words, civil, calm, and stern, which had usually the effect of reducing him to silence. Maud Warrenne used to think that there was some fearful mystery between them; but the mystery was — the marriage of two persons so dissimilar.

They had no children; but Mrs. Creswick's brother, a gentleman high in the civil service in India, had begged that she would take the charge of his only daughter, until he returned to England. She accepted the office, and received the young lady at the Ferns, during the pauses of her education at a very expensive

finishing school. But, an heiress and a spoilt child, Florence Reynolds had formed her own character, without Mrs. Creswick's assistance. At the age of eighteen she left school, and came to reside permanently with her aunt, until her father should arrive to claim her. She had, for the last six years, been learning everything, and therefore it is needless to remark that she knew nothing; but she was a beauty as well as an heiress, and her ignorance rather enhanced her attractions with the reasoning sex.

It had been the wish of Mrs. Creswick to encourage an intimacy between Maud Warrenne and her niece; but there existed no good understanding between these young ladies. Florence, proud of her beauty, her fortune, and the marked deference always paid to her expectations by her aunt's guests, was not ambitious to cultivate the acquaintance of the daughter of their medical man; and, perhaps, with all her vanity, it sometimes crossed her

mind, that Maud, in her white frock and straw bonnet, was superior to herself in intelligence, in character, and even in beauty. Maud, therefore, was subject to the heiress's scornful indifference, or, still more galling, to her punctilious condescension. Keenly sensible of the difference in their fortunes, and still more deeply conscious of the older blood that her own family could boast, she bore the obnoxious manners of Miss Reynolds in haughty silence; and would never have crossed her path, but for the sincere affection she felt for Mrs. Creswick.

Maud had fulfilled her early promise of beauty. At eighteen she was an exquisite specimen of the Norman style, which is directly opposed to the attributes of Grecian beauty. The long slender neck, the elegant, but almost attenuated, limbs, the slight, flexible waist, are entirely distinct from the full and massive undulations of the Greek form. Her dark grey eyes, with their long eyelashes, looked almost black by candle-light. Her

Norman nose, sharply defined, and raised boldly from the face, with high, well-cut nostrils, and the fine, slight expression of her upper lip, gave a spiritual outline to her countenance; while her dark brown hair and eyebrows seemed almost painted upon her clear, broad forehead, so striking was the contrast of their colour.

Florence Reynolds was rather above the middle height, by no means slight in her person, though her waist was beautifully small. She had a remarkable profusion of the very lightest brown hair, almost of a flaxen colour —long, half-opened blue eyes, a high slight nose, and a mouth the colour of a rose-leaf. Her complexion was dazzling—of Saxon fairness, which the slightest exercise dyed with a brilliant flush; and her toilet (a considerable item in the catalogue of a beauty) was always costly and well-chosen. Had Maud been able to dress as expensively as Miss Reynolds, and had her position been as defined, it is probable

that the number of their admirers would have been equally divided;—as it was, Florence was everywhere recognized as a great beauty, and Maud now and then spoken of as a pretty girl.

Florence was an accomplished coquette. She had the art, by a thousand soft and indefinite means of attraction, to increase the effect of her personal charms;—and very few men were ever in her society without being, at least for a time, intoxicated by the singular fascination of her manner. She had already refused several proposals which she had invited by every means in her power, but which appeared to cause her very great astonishment when they really came. She could not be accused of seeking to marry—she enjoyed too much this unprincipled use of her influence—confident that it would be always in her power to make a splendid match when she should be weary of breaking hearts.

But among her numerous admirers, she had not one more sincere or more disinterested than

Leonard Warrenne. When he first returned from Switzerland, where he had spent two or three years in acquiring the modern languages, he found himself always a welcome guest at the Ferns. Mrs. Creswick extended to him the regard she entertained for his sister; and Colonel Creswick was glad to see any one at dinner with whom he could gossip. He was constantly inviting him, and thus he was thrown into the dangerous way of Miss Reynolds. For some time he contented himself by a distant and silent admiration of her dazzling person—but this mute worship was very little suited to the imperious taste of Florence. She suddenly thawed in her manner, which had at first partaken of the icy nature of her intercourse with his sister, and engaged him frequently in conversation, sometimes careless and airy, and sometimes verging upon the sentimental. For some time Leonard had the comfort of imagining, that he simply felt an interest in observing her character, which he fancied to be singularly

engaging. He thought she was judged hardly, and misunderstood by those who pronounced her to be heartless, and artful, and vain. He considered Mrs. Creswick, with her stern and immoveable ideas of integrity, to be wholly unfitted to pass judgment on the capricious and delicate shades of her niece's character. But these fine platonic investigations ended, as they always do end—in an ardent, though in this case, hopeless attachment. He never for a moment dreamed of aspiring to the hand of the wealthy heiress—he was aware that his situation rendered such hopes out of the question. But he fancied, like a very young man, that he could remain under all circumstances devoted to her service—that like a knight of the ancient chivalry from which he has descended, he might hold himself for ever bound to obey her slightest wish, without a hope of any future recompence. He saw that she was aware of his passion—and that she did not appear offended by a devotion at once so absolute and so un-

presuming. But these fanciful visions were destined to be somewhat rudely interrupted.

Mr. Warrenne, who had for some months been looking out for a situation for his son, at length obtained one in the house of a Mr. Thomason in London. It was necessary, that Leonard should set off directly to begin his duties; and the day before he left he called, as a matter of course, at the Ferns, to take leave of the Creswicks.

As he crossed the lawn to go up to the house, he saw Florence walking at a little distance under the trees, leading her pet dog by her side in a blue ribbon. A slight degree of bashfulness at the sight of his "bosom's lord," made him hesitate an instant before approaching her.

But Florence was, fortunately, oppressed by no such timidity.

"Good morning, Mr. Leonard," said she, coming slowly towards him, and shaking hands with the most friendly air in the world; "if

you did not recognize *me*, I think, at least, you might remember Fidelio!

"It is impossible that I could fail to recognize you," said Leonard; "but I thought you might, perhaps, wish to be alone."

"Oh! I don't consider you an interruption," said Florence graciously.

"How well Fidelio is looking," said Leonard. "I think his coat must now be white enough to content you; it is like swansdown."

"Yes; my present maid consents to wash him every morning. You know that was the parting point with Anaise; and Aunt Creswick vexed me so by taking her side. That is the worst of people who live in the country. They have such limited notions. But your sister is not with you to day?"—

"No," said Leonard; "she was engaged with Alice."

"I cannot tell how it is, but your sister and I do not get on together," said Florence.

A bystander might have remarked that

unless Maud had a rather unusual fancy for being the recipient of all Miss Reynolds' varieties of pride and temper, it was not likely that she would get on with her very fast.

"She is afraid of you," said Leonard, smiling.

"No; but am I so very formidable?" asked Florence, with an arch smile.

"Very!" replied Leonard, with expression.

Florence coloured, and turned to look after her dog.

"But you were walking?" said Leonard.

"Yes; just loitering about," said Florence, moving towards the shrubbery as she spoke. "It is pleasanter here than in the house; don't you think so?

"Much pleasanter," said Leonard.

"The fact is, that I was glad to make my escape from the drawing room," resumed Florence. "We have been having rather a cloudy interview; a council of three upon the merits Sir Frederic Manning.

This sort of confidence was not unusual with Florence, for, with that kind of openness which Bacon pronounces to be uncomely, she gave publicity to her affairs by discussing them with any intimate acquaintance; nor was she, in the present instance, quite correct in her statement, for the discussion had not so much turned upon the merits of Sir Frederic, as upon the demerits of her conduct towards him. Mrs. Creswick having taken upon herself to expostulate with her upon the undue encouragement she had given that gentleman; while the Colonel sometimes complimented "Dearest Madam" upon her delicacy and penetration, and sometimes shifted round and defended the harmless levity of his "fair, but capricious, niece."

"I have not the honour of an acquaintance with Sir Frederic," said Leonard; "but I hope his merits are very great. They should be surpassing," he added, with fervour, "if they

are to meet with the success that report has assigned to him."

Florence sighed deeply, and remained silent a few moments; and then said with a sweet smile.

"Confess, Mr. Leonard, that it is very hard to be subject to the interference of others in an affair of this nature."

"I am sure," said Leonard, with some embarrassment, "that your best friends would leave you to the decision of your own heart."

"Ah! but my heart is so exacting, you can't imagine," said Florence, playfully. "I demand too much ever to be happy in my future lot."

"I trust, at least," said Leonard earnestly, "that you will never cease to remember how much power rests in your own hands."

"The enviable power of saying 'no!'" returned Florence smiling. Then turning towards him with an appearance of the most engaging frankness, she said:—"Come Mr.

Warrenne, give me your opinion. I am sure you are a true friend. Here is a gentleman with a very large property—a title, which you know is always an advantage—an excellent character, and, for anything I know, to the contrary, a tolerable understanding—and yet I am so perverse, that I cannot manœuvre the possessor of all these advantages into an interesting point of view!—*Que faire?*"

"You do not seriously ask my advice," replied Leonard; and, with all his enthusiasm, he felt somewhat chilled that she should propose such a question to him; knowing, as he felt she did, his sentiments towards herself. "I am sure that *you* must look upon a marriage of convenience with unmixed feelings of abhorrence—

> 'The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
> That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature, is a paradise'

compared to such a fate."

"But you are so romantic!" said Florence,

shaking back her long ringlets, and looking softly up to him; "I never met with such a Paladin in all my life!"

"Miss Reynolds," said Leonard, stopping short, and taking a sudden resolution, "I came to-day to take leave of you; and some freedom may, perhaps, be allowed or forgiven to me in parting. I think you have not now to learn how deeply I am devoted to your interest; nor at what expense of my own, I would, if it were possible, secure your happiness; and this—you may believe me—without a thought of ever presuming to expect from you the recompense even of a smile. It is not likely that you should ever be placed in a situation where you could derive benefit from my services; but if such a time should come, give me the pleasure—the consolation of knowing that you would call upon me for my exertions with as much frankness as if you summoned a brother to your aid."

Leonard, half-frightened at his own bold-

ness, and breathless with excitement, waited for her reply.

Florence burst out laughing.

"Really, Mr. Leonard," said she, "you exceed every hero I ever read of! I only wish I were the Princess Micomicon, that I might reply to you in the same strain! I am quite sorry that you are going; for we might have enacted quite a little melodrame together, to enliven the awful solitude of Erlesmede."

Leonard felt for an instant as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet and shivered his airy castles into fragments: and no one can describe the pain that can sometimes be compressed into a few moments.

He felt that he could have forgiven her for not loving him, but *not* for proving herself unworthy of his love. For it was unworthy to receive with scorn as sincere a tribute as was ever laid at the feet of beauty.

But he collected himself, just as the silence began to grow embarrassing.

"I have yet another favour to ask of you, Miss Reynolds," he said, calmly, "which I trust you will consider less extravagant than my last; it is, that you will kindly present my compliments to Colonel and Mrs. Creswick, and express my regret that I had not time left to bid them farewell."

Then taking off his hat, and bowing deeply, before Florence could recover from her surprise at this transition of manner, he crossed the lawn and disappeared among the trees.

CHAPTER III.

Ang.—I would that these last hours were double-winged
To fly more quickly from us—could you stay,
I'd lull the fine sands in the warning glass
As if to hinder the swift foot of time.
So I would speed our parting; as it must be.
What *is* done, can be better looked upon
Than what is yet to do.

Anon.

It was evening, and Mr. Warrenne and his family were assembled in the drawing-room. Mr. Warrenne was writing at a table by the light of a single lamp, surrounded by books and notes, by leaves of manuscript, and all the litter of an author. A beautiful branch of a tropical creeper with purple blossoms, was placed

in a small jar of Bohemian glass, and fell trailing upon the table-cover. Mr. Warrenne was engaged in a botanical work, to which he devoted almost every moment of his leisure time. He was very tall and thin with a bald forehead —retaining much of the old fashioned courtesy in his manner, which the remarkable gentleness of his voice and disposition prevented from being formal. He was remarkably independent in his habits ;—it was his way to rise and light his own fire always at four o'clock in the morning, all through the winter—and had he been ever so rich, he would very ill have borne to let it be done for him by a servant. Not a line of copy would he ever suffer Maud to transcribe, either for his great work on botany, or for the numerous contributions which he sent to scientific or medical journals. He was a philanthropist in the purest and truest sense of the word—a philanthrophist who did not neglect the claims of his own fireside, in an abstract zeal for the advancement of society. In

his earnest endeavour to elevate the character and improve the comfort of the working classes, to which some of his smaller works were devoted, he had not forgotten to do all that is in the power of a parent to elevate and improve the characters of his own children. He had given them the best education that his utmost means would allow;—and had set before them, both by precept and example, those serious duties, and that high tone of feeling, without which the most accomplished education is of little worth. The consequence was that Mr. Warrenne's children were refined—not in the fineness of their cambric handkerchiefs, or the cut glass of their dressing cases, but in a sense of honour that in these days would be considered as fastidious, and a sensibility to the feelings of others, which is the true *morale* of good breeding, and a very agreeable substitute for etiquette.

Leonard and Maud were walking up and down the room together arm in arm. Alice,

seated in the shade, was playing a motivo from one of Beethoven's masses on the seraphine. Her rounded figure, her dazzling complexion, and bright rings of brown sunny hair, all looked soft and indistinct in the dim light. Leonard although very like Maud, had not his sister's pretensions to regular beauty—his features were less critical—his complexion much darker—and his short black hair and marked brows were wanting in the splendid texture and colouring that distinguished hers;—but he had the same brilliant eyes and glittering teeth—and his figure, hardly taller than Maud's, possessed the same elegance of form and gesture.

"What a beautiful movement that is!" said Leonard, stopping in his walk near the seraphine. "Do, Alice, play the Benedictus over again."

Alice began to repeat the movement.

"You go to-morrow," said Maud, resting her head on his shoulder, "I can think of nothing else; what *shall* I do without you?"

"But when I was in Switzerland nearly three years, Maud," said Leonard, "you managed to do without me then?"

"I was not so old then," said Maud, "I did not so much feel the need of having somebody to talk to—to tell my troubles to."

"But you know, Maud, a philosopher should rely entirely on the consolations of his own mind!"

"You are like Hamlet, Leonard."

"How so?"

"Your philosophy is just as deep as his;—you have a profound saying for every emergency—but you feel exactly like other people all the time."

Leonard smiled, and made no reply to this attack—perhaps the little interview of the morning had taught him that it was not the toothache alone that had power to unnerve a philosopher.

"I hope, papa, we don't disturb you, roam-

ing about?" said Maud, as they came to Mr. Warrenne's table in their promenade.

"My dear!—disturb me!" said Mr. Warrenne, looking up from his writing and bringing his ideas down by degrees to the present company, "no, not at all, I assure you."

"Well now, Maud," said Leonard as they crossed back to the seraphine again—"what are your troubles at this present time? not any very particular ones I think."

"Leonard!—it is so like a man to think that women have no troubles!"

"I am all attention," said Leonard, smiling, "I only ask for information."

"Well, for instance," said Maud, "what do you think of Miss Reynolds' behaviour to me?"

"Miss Reynolds!" said Leonard with a start.

"Oh! I cannot tell you how she annoys me;" said Maud, eagerly, "fifty times I have said to myself that I would never go to the

Ferns again and expose myself to the cold insolence of her manners—but I like Mrs. Creswick too well to stay away altogether."

"Did you see Miss Reynolds this morning?"

"Yes, I met her in the garden."

"And how did she behave?"

"Oh! she is a little capricious, you know."

"I understand."

"And then the reports which are spread and believed against papa from time to time—don't you call that a very reasonable ground of complaint?"

"Why in that respect, my father fares no worse than other doctors," said Leonard; "it is a profession that is calculated to make friends and foes from causes over which the individual has no control. And I agree with you, that no calumny is too extravagant to be believed—especially if it relates to an honest man."

"Very true—but it vexes me all the same," replied Maud.

"It does not vex my father you see," returned Leonard, "when people circulate a falsehood of extra magnitude about him, he ponders a little and then sets it down to a partial derangement of intellect on the part of the inventor. He cannot comprehend pure malignity—especially when it is unprovoked."

"He hardly knows the mischief it does him," said Maud.

"I think he does—but he treats it as he would treat a bad crop of potatoes. He would be angry with nobody. I don't think he *could* bear malice. Ah! Maud, when shall you and I have schooled our minds to such an even balance?"

"I should like to see them all burnt!" cried Maud, with a sudden burst of indignation.

Alice stopped playing in wonder—Leonard began to laugh at Maud's eager face, and Mr. Warrenne looking up from his writing, said quietly—"No, my dear, you would not;" and then addressed himself to his task again.

"I thought," said Leonard, taking a seat beside Maud on the sofa, "that Miss Reynolds looked more beautiful than ever this morning."

It seemed, that though he had resolved never to think of her again, he could not help talking of her.

"Indeed! What was her dress?" asked Maud.

"Oh, something magnificent—a silk I suppose; of rose colour mixed with black."

"Ah! that would suit her fair complexion admirably," said Maud.

"Is she not fair?" exclaimed Leonard.

"Very—nothing can be fairer," replied Maud.

"And her eyes!—those long blue eyes!" exclaimed Leonard, softening more and more towards Miss Reynolds as he recalled her several attractions.

"I do not like her," said Maud, laughing, "now I have praised her enough. I shall say nothing in favour of her eyes."

"After all," said Leonard, as if thinking aloud, "what allowance should be made for her! so rich, so flattered!—it is no wonder that she sometimes forgets to be considerate."

"Leonard, my dear boy," said Mr. Warrenne, looking up from his writing, "I wish you would have the goodness to mend me a pen."

This was one of the few things that his children could manage to do for him, as his sight was not good enough to mend pens by candle-light. Leonard started up, and went to the table.

"It is a singular thing," said Mr. Warrenne, laying down his pen, and making the papers before him straight and square, "it is a very strange fact, and one to which I wish to draw your attention, that, in the vegetable kingdom, we do not find any of the species become extinct, from time to time, as in the animal kingdom. Some specimens are, it is true, very rare, but they do not actually dis-

appear from the face of the earth—Leonard, my dear, this pen is a little too soft—of course I do not now refer to those productions of nature which existed prior to what is popularly called the creation of the world.

Poor Maud! This last remark brought her to her third trouble. The clergyman of the parish was on very unfriendly terms with Mr. Warrenne, because he believed, in common with Dr. Buckland and most other geologists, that the creation of the earth was antecedent, by many centuries, to the creation of man. It was not enough that he never obtruded his opinions — he held them; and Mr. Ranger hated him with a bitterness that might not seem to be very evangelical. But most people said that of course Mr. Warrenne must have done something wrong; for it was not likely that a clergyman would be prepossessed against any one without good cause.

"Ah! Mr. Ranger, Leonard!" cried Maud, who had forgotten this trouble until the men-

tion of the creation had recalled it to her mind.

Leonard looked up smiling from his pen. "Aye, Maud," he said, "that is rather a more substantial trouble than the little airs of Miss Reynolds, or the gossip of half-a-dozen crazy old women."

"I can't think how it is that we are so beset," said Maud.

"Why, my dear, because we are poor," said Leonard, "rich people smile and fawn on each other, but they turn their rough side to us; we don't get any of the 'hollow sunshine' some poet speaks of; and I really don't know that we are much the worse for the omission, for when we find a friend he must be sterling."

"Like Mr. Scudamore," said Maud.

"Exactly; by the way, Maud, I half expected he would have called in this evening; for when I went yesterday to bid him goodbye,

he was gone to R——, on business, and now I shall go away without seeing him."

"How I shall scold him if he does not come!" said Maud. "Stay, is not that a step?"

"That is Karl, coming from the stable," returned Alice. She was always an authority upon footsteps.

"Were you talking of Mr. Scudamore, my dear?" said Mr. Warrenne looking up, a few minutes afterwards.

"Yes, papa."

"I met him this morning, my dear, and he said he would breakfast with us to-morrow, that he might shake hands with Leonard before he went."

"Oh! that is right, Leonard," said Maud. "You are sure now that you have got everything ready?"

"Everything, Maud."

"How often I shall write to you! and Alice too."

"Oh yes! take care that Alice writes, don't let her grow lazy."

They all stood round, unwilling to break up and go to bed. The last night.

"My dears," said Mr. Warrenne, as he laid by his manuscript, "do you know what o'clock it is?"

Nobody knew; but nobody moved.

"And we must breakfast at half-past seven, because Leonard starts at eight," continued Mr. Warrenne.

"Yes, papa," said the group.

But while they were hesitating, the matter was settled by Dinah, the housemaid, who popped her round face in at the door, with the formula so familiar to the country practitioner—

"Please sir, you are wanted."

At this well-known sound, Mr. Warrenne bade a hasty good night to his children, and followed the round face out of the room. Leonard and Alice consented to go up

stairs; and Maud sat down to wait her father's return, and to stifle her tears like a true woman, lest the sight of them should add to his regret.

CHAPTER IV.

Now were it not Sir Scudamour to you,
Dislikeful paine so sad a task to take;
Mote we entreat you with this gentle crew
Is now so well accorded all anew,
That as we ride together on our way
Ye will recount to us in order dew
All that adventure—

Spencer.

Mr. Scudamore was the most intimate friend of the Warrennes. He was about fifty years old; still a handsome man, of a stately figure, and a fine imposing carriage. He was remarkably good natured—not by any means addicted to literature—but as honest and straightforward a man as ever lived. He had been formerly in the army; but he did not

seem to have felt much partiality for that profession, since he sent his two sons to India in the Company's Service, and had been heard to declare that he would rather see them sweeping the streets than serving Her Majesty. And this, not from any feeling of disloyalty; but from a floating idea that they would find a good crossing a better provision than anything they might pick up under the royal auspices.

He had a widowed sister living with him. This lady had married a gentleman, who left behind him at his death, nothing but a very large amount of debts. Mr. Scudamore had paid his brother-in-law's debts, and had offered his sister a home; and the world, which is famous for its accurate judgments, had given him a reputation for riches, on account of an action which had greatly diminished whatever he might have before possessed. But Mr. Scudamore did not particularly care what the world said. He was a bit of good-natured misan-

thrope; he took to farming with some degree of success, laughed at his sister, whose excentricities were almost unbounded—encouraged Leonard's philosophy—admired Maud—petted Alice, and was extremely popular with Mr. Warrenne and his family. He it was who, from time to time, gladdened the heart of Mr. Warrenne with specimens of those rare and beautiful flowers which would have been out of his reach but for the zeal of his friend—and he it was who was wanting to complete the breakfast party on the last morning of Leonard's stay, and whose coming would be positive assurance that it was actually half-past seven o'clock, for his punctuality was infallible.

The morning was bright and fresh—cool enough at that early hour to bring deep roses into Maud's cheeks—for she had been round the orchard prying at the foot of every mossy tree to collect the last violets that still lingered there, to make a cluster for Leonard. It would be long enough before he would get

another, with the dew still upon it. Half-past seven would come. Alice had given notice of Mr. Scudamore's approach before any one else had detected his stately step, and Maud began to pour out the tea; not daring to look at Leonard, but trying to talk cheerfully with every one else.

"And so Leonard goes to day," said Mr. Scudamore, as soon as he had taken his seat at the table. It was a self evident truth; but it filled Maud's eyes with tears notwithstanding—she turned away without making any reply.

Poor Mr. Scudamore, who had said, according to his custom what was uppermost in his mind, and who had possibly meant his remark to be consolatory, now did his best to retrieve his error.

"Well, never mind," said he, taking her hand. "Dick will be over here, one of these days."

"Dick" was his eldest son, in whom he

imagined all human perfections to be centred. And it was a proof of his extreme partiality to Maud, that while he gave flowers to her father, and pet birds to Alice, he always, in his mind's eye, reserved "Dick" for Maud; and, without exactly intending it, he was constantly apprising her of his intentions. Maud dried her eyes half smiling. "And how is Mrs. Thorns this morning!" she asked.

"Pretty well, I fancy; the old lady is digging a pit in the cowslip meadow."

"What is she doing that for?" asked Alice.

"I don't know. She and Jack Robins were hard at work all yesterday."

"Tell her I shall come and help her one day soon," said Maud.

"Do," said Mr. Scudamore, "I shall take you both home with me—I have some ripe strawberries for Alice."

"Has the grandfather really some ripe strawberries?" asked Alice; "why Karl says that ours are not turning yet."

It was Maud who had fixed the venerable appellation of grandfather upon Mr. Scudamore, because with a woman's readiness she had detected that he was still a little vain of his fine appearance; and he bore it very well, conscious that he was many years younger than her father.

And now the coach drove up; five minutes before the hour—and happily coaches give but little time for farewells—the luggage is pounced upon, the passenger hurried in, and the pang of parting cut as short as may be.

"There, he is out of sight now," said Mr. Scudamore to Maud, who had watched with tearful eyes the rapid progress of the coach along the road until it disappeared among the dewy hedgerows.

"Yes, he is out of sight;" repeated Alice, who could no longer hear the wheels.

"What *will* he do in London?" said Maud, in a desponding tone.

"Do?" said Mr. Scudamore, cheerfully,—

"make his fortune to be sure—come home as rich as a jew—buy Forrel Court when Mrs. Jane Digby pleases to shuffle off this mortal coil; and marry the prettiest woman (after yourself) in the county."

Maud had not heard distinctly the last part of this sentence, for Mr. Warrenne had stepped back into the passage to put on his great coat, and Maud had darted in to help him on with it. Mr. Warrenne always declined this piece of service on her part, but he generally found himself invested in his garment before his sentence was quite finished. And though of course people who have no valets to put on their great coats are, and ought to be, despised by those who have, I question if Mr. Warrenne would have been half so much pleased with the attendance of a servant as he was with that of his bright-eyed daughter. Karl now hobbled to the front door, leading the old white horse, and followed by a beautiful fawn-coloured greyhound, which coursed round the horse and

leaped upon him, without in the least disturbing his serenity.

"Shall we take Ondine with us?" asked Maud, as she stooped to caress the greyhound.

"To be sure," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Karl!" said Maud, laughing, "you must make up your mind to go without Ondine for a whole morning."

The old German nodded—and then drawing the tufted mane of the white horse through his rough hands, he said slowly—"When the golden youth comes back from London with a great deal of money the father will have a better horse to ride, young lady."

As Karl neither spoke nor understood more English than was necessary to conduct his small purchases in the village, the conversations between him and his young ladies always passed in his own language.

"Ey, ey!" repeated Karl, fastening a small steel chain to the collar of the greyhound, and handing the end of it to Alice, "never tell me

that the golden youth will not be rich one day."

"But what were you saying just now grandfather, about pretty women," asked Maud, as they set out upon their walk.

"About pretty women? Let me see—oh! I was saying that Miss Reynolds was, (next to you), the prettiest woman in the county."

"Not exactly that," said Alice. "The grandfather was saying, that Leonard would marry the prettiest woman in the county when he came back."

"I hope to goodness that he will never marry Miss Reynolds," cried Maud, "though fortunately there is no fear of that. I hardly know indeed, if she considers him even worth laughing at!"

"I should not mind taking you a heavy bet of that," said Mr. Scudamore, "perhaps you do not recollect, Mistress Maud, that where I sit in church, I have a perfect view of Miss

Reynolds as well as Master Leonard—and I have caught some looks passing."

"There! we see now how the grandfather employs himself in church," said Alice.

"I always knew that he behaved very badly," replied Maud, "You know, Alice, I told you one Sunday that he was making me laugh when the child cried so loud."

"As for you," said Mr. Scudamore, "attacking Maud in his turn, "the reason why you dislike Miss Reynolds is very evident; you are jealous of her."

"Oh! grandfather—jealous of Miss Reynolds!" cried Alice.

"If I were jealous of anything, it would be of her beautiful horse," said Maud; "I should so like to ride on horseback."

"When you were in India, grandfather, did you ever ride on an elephant?" asked Alice.

"Oh, once or twice; just to say that I had done so; but it is not the usual mode of travelling over there, Miss Alice."

"Alberic went on an elephant to a tiger hunt," said Alice; "I should so like to ride on one. Oh, you do not know how I long to travel."

"But dear Alice," said Maud, "you would have all the fatigue, and none of the pleasure."

"None of the pleasure! Oh, Maud! think of the climate, and the scent of foreign flowers, and the numberless sounds of a tropical country—and a foreign language, only fancy how strange that would be; and the notes of the birds—and the large-leaved trees—and the stir of everything, so different to what we have here; and, of course, somebody to describe to me what was passing. How different to be told at the instant—There go the women with their muslin veils, carrying their brazen vessels to the tank; and there, farther on, what a flight of many-coloured birds—and now the sky is hot and pink, and the great palm trees are as still as death—and the large white mosque in the middle of the plain is so distinct

in the sunlight that you can count every arch: how different this would be on the spot, to hearing it from a book as I do."

"We must ship you out to Alberic," said Mr. Scudamore, laughing—

"I should be a troublesome visitor," said Alice, smiling.

"And, besides, I could not spare you," added Maud.

"Well, well—when Dick comes home, we shall see who can be spared," remarked Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure," said Maud, "I never in my life was so tired of any body's name as of his; and such a name!—'Dick!'"

"But where is Forrel Court, grandfather?" asked Alice.

"Not know Forrel Court!" said Mr. Scudamore, "to my fancy it is the prettiest place within thirty miles; and they say that Mrs. Jane Digby was altogether as handsome—thirty years ago."

"And who is Mrs. Jane Digby?" asked Maud.

"What! have you never heard your father speak of Mrs. Jane Digby?"

"Never," returned Maud.

"Well, then, you ask him."

"But he won't tell us," said Maud.

"He never tells us any gossip," remarked Alice.

"No, we are obliged to come to the grandfather for all the *cancan* of the neighbourhood," said Maud.

"And so Mrs. Digby——" said Alice.

"No, no—a couple of children; you have no business with such stories," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Why, is she an enemy of papa's, like Mrs. Nicholls?" asked Alice.

"Oh no, my dear, nothing of the sort."

"Now, grandfather, don't be provoking," said Maud; "I *will* hear it!"

"Aye, when Queen Maud says she will,

there's nothing for it," said Mr. Scudamore. "Well, you must know, then, that old Digby, her father, left the most singular will ever made by man I do believe. She was his only child, and he therefore left her his whole estate and fortune, with this absurd condition—that she should forfeit it all if she ever married. Now, you know it almost looked as if the man wished his daughter to die an old maid; for, though a handsome woman enough, few people would care to take her without so much as an acre of the property."

"Poor Mrs. Digby," said Maud. "Not one of her admirers was true-hearted enough to stand such a test!"

"I am sure she was better without them then," said Alice.

"To be sure," said Maud; "only one wouldn't like to be given up."

"But what has papa to do with the story?" asked Alice.

"Ask him," said Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure if papa had loved her, he would have married her without any fortune," said Maud.

"But suppose it was what you ladies call an unrequited attachment?" said Mr. Scudamore.

"Well, and I dare say a great many ladies were attached to papa," said Alice, simply.

"There—get in both of you," said Mr. Scudamore, putting them both in at the open gate of his garden; "at your age you know nothing at all about such matters I should hope."

"And where will you fasten Ondine that she may not worry your sheep?" asked Alice.

"Just outside the porch; she shall have some dinner when we get our luncheon."

"And some strawberries—just a few, grandfather; she loves strawberries," said Alice.

"Well, she shall have two or three. Hallo! Jack Robins! where is the Old Lady?"

"If you please, Sir," said Jack Robins, a decent farm servant in round hat, smock frock, and leather gaiters, "missus be down in the well."

"In the well?"—

"Yes, Sir;" and not deeming any explanation necessary, he touched his hair, and walked on.

"I suppose she is not drowned, or he would not take it so coolly," said Mr. Scudamore, laughing; "and if she likes to spend her time in the well, I know no reason why one should hinder her. But if you have no objection, we will just go and see what she is about."

They went through the garden into the woodyard, and so on to the farm-yard, where at the other side, just in front of Jack Robins's cottage, stood the well. As they came up there emerged from the top a very old straw bonnet, tied down with an older silk handkerchief, and further, the whole person of Mrs. Thorns.

"Well, old lady," said Mr. Scudamore, "have you been down to take a peep at the stars?"

"No, brother," said that lady, bounding from the margin of the well to the ground; "but I thought some of the brick-work was loose within, so I made them put down a ladder, and looked to it myself."

"And you are not wet through, I declare," said Mr. Scudamore.

"No; I did not go so low as the water," replied Mrs. Thorns; "there's a brick fallen, brother, and you had better see about it."

Mrs. Thorns was not five feet high, as active as a bird, and an incessant talker. Her eyes were as bright and as restless as a hawk's, and her features were tolerably regular. It was impossible to dress in older or more shabby clothes than she did, and this quite as a matter of choice, for her brother would willingly have supplied her with better, if she could have been induced to put them on; and as she held the

purse for house expenses, and at least once a week (according to her own account) saved him from utter ruin, she could have conducted her wardrobe upon different principles, if such had been her pleasure

"Well, young ladies," said she, turning suddenly upon them; "Neither of you married yet? What a world it is! Nobody marries now. And yet you are not so bad looking; I don't see why you should not pick up somebody, or you either, if you would leave off pretending to be blind."

"Oh, Mrs. Thorns!" said Alice.

"Blind! look at her—no more blind than I am—see how she steers clear of that crib. Is it a cow or a horse feeding there? Eh, Miss Alice!"

"Oh! a cow, Mrs. Thorns; I know that by her breathing."

"Ah! don't tell me; you see her as well as I do. But come in, and let us get something to eat. I am as hungry as a hunter."

The strawberries and cream were ready for them when they went in, with various other good things. Mrs. Thorns did not sit down to table, but walked briskly backwards and forwards, stopping before her plate, and taking a mouthful every now and then, and talking incessantly; and it was one of her peculiarities, that she would carry on a long conversation about persons of whom her audience had never heard, and did not appear in the least annoyed when she found that they were quite in the dark as to the subject of discourse.

"I never saw you looking so well," said Mr. Scudamore as Maud laid aside her bonnet, and smoothed back her exquisite hair with her hand;—"your walk has done you good—you have grown too in the last few months. I wish with all my heart that Dick was here at this moment."

"Oh dear!" said Maud, impatiently, the glow on her cheek growing deeper, "I wish

you would let 'Dick' alone from this time forth!"

"Yes, and I don't think I was ever so frightened in my life," said Mrs. Thorns, coming to a stand-still for a minute before her plate, "as the day John Butler's horse ran away with him and fell down the chalk-pit—nobody thought that Eleanor would ever have got over it—I fancied myself she would have gone into a decline; and as Lydia had died of something of the sort, it might almost be said to run in the family—but Livingstone gave us hopes from the first, and if it had not been for that, I don't know how Mrs. Hemmings would have kept up her spirits."

As soon as she had finished this exordium, she set off again walking up and down the room; and every one present being used to her style, it was not thought necessary to enquire who Mrs. Hemmings, and John Butler, and Eleanor, and the others, were. As soon as Mrs

Thorns had finished this discursive kind of meal, she drew on her York tan gloves and walked briskly off, leaving Mr. Scudamore to entertain his guests; and he took them to feed the pigeons, and see the youngest calves and pass judgment on the horses and pry into the barns —all which proceedings Alice seemed to enjoy quite as much as her sister.

In the course of their wanderings they came upon Mrs. Thorns, who was busy digging a kind of trench in the cowslip meadow in company with Jack Robins; which Mr. Scudamore told her looked very like a grave, and he supposed she was qualifying for the office of sexton when it should be vacant.

Mrs. Thorns flung up a spadeful of earth; told him to mind his own business; and then setting her battered straw bonnet more firmly on her head, she resumed her occupation.

Mr. Scudamore walked home with the girls, and as they turned into the lane which

led to their house, they met a gay riding party from the Ferns.

Miss Reynolds was among the foremost, on a pretty slight bay horse; and by her side rode a Foreign Count with a formidable beard, to whose discourse she seemed to incline a very attentive ear.

Florence never looked handsomer than on horseback. Her high close habit set off the outline of her beautiful figure—and the cloud of thick fair curls that escaped from her hat, gave an air of softness to that masculine coiffure. She bowed, coldly enough as she passed on, and turning to the Frenchman made some remark on Maud which seemed to amuse him very much. The little Colonel who was behind with some ladies, reined up, and bestowed some compliments on the sisters, mixed with sly insinuations on Mr. Scudamore for securing such fair companions in his walks.

"And how anybody can think," said Maud, as soon as the Colonel was out of hearing,

"that Leonard ever cared one straw for that horrid Miss Reynolds—except indeed allowing her to be handsome, which we all do."

"And defending her, Maud;—you know he always defended her," said Alice.

"And looking at her in church—I will answer for that part of the story," said Mr. Scudamore.

"I am sure, if he ever did think of her, I hope he will forget her very name, now he is away from her," said Maud.

"And bring home a rich bride from the parish of Farringdon Without," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Well, that would be one way to shorten his servitude in the great city."

CHAPTER V.

Lady F.—He is your slave
And as such use him.
The City Madam

How some men creep in skittish Fortune's halls
While others plays the idiots in her eyes!
Triolus and Cressida.

It may be supposed that Leonard Warrenne did not much enjoy his new mode of life. The transition from a beautiful part of the country to the heart of London, was disagreeable enough; but the class of people among whom he was thrown, as a merchants clerk, was still more repulsive to his taste. He was obliged to dine at an eating-house, near his office, which

was frequented by people "in his own class of life,"—to use his own phrase, in speaking of them,—whose tone of voice, language, gestures, sentiments, and mode of eating, sent a thrill of horror through him, whenever he came near them. He formed no acquaintance with any of these persons, who all belonged to different establishments, and in the house to which he was attached, there were but two other clerks in his particular department—with both of these he was on very civil terms —with the rest of the officials he was hardly acquainted by sight.

The office where he daily attended was a small dark room, with that peculiar air of uncleanliness inseparable from every place in the city; a place where you find your hands want washing every ten minutes, though you cannot exactly detect the cause of the defi e-ment. There was a high desk and stool—that uneasy throne which in so many cases leads to the sovereignty of wealth—the desk divided in

half by a brass rail and green curtain, on one side of which the ancient clerk plied his pen; the other, was the appointed place of Master Leonard. This old clerk, the head of the establishment (under the partners,) was a man of some intelligence, and much kindness of heart, with rough manners, and an unaccountable habit of swearing great oaths on small occasions. The second clerk was a hard-headed, sober man of business, ungainly in person, not very grammatical in language, but altogether free from the strong peculiarities of his elder compeer.

It was early one morning, that Leonard and Mr. Mills were hard at work, and Mr. Bennet, the next eldest clerk thinking it was rather too soon to begin, took his seat on the tall fender, and enlivened the party with a little agreeable conversation.

"So I understand that Mr. Thomason gave a grand ball last night," he began.

"Ah! he always does the thing in style,"

said Mr. Mills, with a horrible oath, that made Leonard drop his pen.

"There was a new beauty, they tell me," said Mr. Bennet.

"Ah! what was her name!" asked Mr. Mills, with his head under the lid of his desk, searching for papers.

"Miss Reynolds, I think they said."

Leonard dropt his pen again.

"Perhaps they will make up a match between her and the musical gentleman," said Mr. Mills, with a sneer.

"Perhaps so," said Mr. Bennet; "for they say she is a great heiress.

"Ah! if you can get a little money into the bargain; eh?" said Mr. Mills.

"To be sure; I must be going now," said Mr. Bennet, getting off the fender.

"Hollo! here comes the musical gentleman," said Mr. Mills, sticking his pen behind his ear.

A young man, very well drest, with his

hat on, and his walking stick in the pocket of his coat, threw open the door and walked quietly in.

He was one of those very few persons that are worth regretting—most people being so entirely devoid of character that you never take the trouble to wish that they were better than they are. A physiognomist who saw Mr. Courtenay would think it worth while to regret that he had not more consideration for others —a less assured opinion of himself. He was what Carlyle calls a "reality." There was decision and firmness in every movement—penetration in every look, and a contempt for the world and its ways in the sarcastic tones of his voice. He looked like a Saxon; with very light hair and eyes, short straight features, a stature much above the ordinary height, that was slight only because he was young, and that graceful outline of the head and bust which may sometimes be found in persons with

old blood in their veins, but which it is hopeless to seek in the *parvenu*.

The clerks wished him good morning; and Leonard, seeing a gentleman enter who seemed to belong to the concern, turned round and bowed slightly.

He paid not the smallest attention to these salutations; but sauntering up to the chimney-piece, with his hat still on, he took up one or two cards which lay there, held them close to his face to read them, and then laying them down, and turning with his back to the fire, said leisurely—

"Is my uncle here, Mr. Mills?"

"No, Mr. Courtenay, he is not."

The young man took up all the cards again, adjusted his hat, but did not take it off, and then began singing, in a low voice, the air of a popular opera. This habit had gained him the *sobriquet* of the musical gentleman among the clerks in Mr. Thomason's establishment.

Leonard, who, though he had not spent

many years abroad, had caught all the courtesy of foreign manners—who never entered a shop without lifting his hat, nor sat next an artisan, in a coach, without addressing to him some cheerful remark—was rather startled by the scornful indifference evinced by the nephew of the principal to the domestics of the house. He felt keenly the want of courtesy in Mr. Courtenay's manner; especially as he could not get rid of the impression that his own descent was gentle, though adverse circumstances had placed him in a humble position; but he contented himself with thinking that Mr. Courtenay was not a philosopher, or he would be scrupulously civil to his inferiors, and he tried to consider that he was only encountering one of those checks that patient merit has been in the habit of taking, every now and then, for a good many centuries past.

"Would you write those letters to Hamburgh this morning, Mr. Courtenay?" asked Mr. Mills, after a long silence on the part of

the clerks, and three distinct airs from Mr. Courtenay, principally from the Opera of *Parisina.*

Mr. Courtenay continued singing the latter part of the Air "*Ah tu sai ch' insieme,*"—took up a pen from Mr. Mills's desk—looked at it —drew towards him the sheet of paper which that gentleman proffered—dipped his pen, and turned to Mr. Mills—

"In German, eh?" he said, in a dry, quick tone.

"If you please, sir," returned Mr. Mills, with humility.

Mr. Courtenay, still standing, wrote rapidly about half a page in the German character, when a voice was heard outside the door, coupled with the shuffling and scratching noise of a large dog, trying to force its way into the room.

"All right!" said Mr. Courtenay, raising his head from his writing, "here I am!"

The door burst open, and two young men

entered, after having, with great difficulty, driven back an immense Newfoundland dog and shut him out.

They hurried up to Mr. Courtenay, who left his writing, and stood talking in the middle of the room. These were two of his cousins; one of whom was quartered in the Tower, and the other, a young man from college.

It was some time before either cousin could speak articulately, there was so much laughing to be got through at the idea that they were really, for the first time in their lives, standing in a merchant's office. They had not very clear ideas upon the subject; they thought they should have found their cousin selling something; but as Mr. Thomason's house was in connection with some great lead mines, and as lead is not unrolled on a counter and sold by the yard, in this country, they were doomed to be disappointed. Mr. Courtenay, as junior partner, disposed of the lead in a different manner.

"I was hard at work, when you came in," he said drily, as soon as the two cousins had come to an end of their remarks and laughter.

"No—were you?—for Heaven's sake, do it again," said the officer, "it would kill me to see you!"

"Pity to defer your martyrdom," said Mr. Courtney, going back to the desk, and resuming his pen.

He wrote the remainder of his letter—the officer watching the process with great curiosity.

"I say, if you have no objection, I will let in that dog," said the collegian, "he seems to be rather uneasy in his mind."

"Pray do," said Mr. Courtenay.

The dog rushed in, and upset whatever could be upset, in a moment;—two wicker chairs, and a basket of waste papers. He then ran violently against the coal scuttle, and having scattered its contents, the officer and the

college gentleman agreed in the propriety of his being made to retire—but with a kind recollection of his too susceptible feelings, they thought it advisable to withdraw also; but they had still so much to say to Mr. Courtenay, that they dragged him between them, his letter still unsigned, into the yard that looked upon the Thames.

"There!" said Mr. Mills, looking round and ascertaining that Mr. Courtenay was gone, —that is the musical gentleman;—a nice man isn't he?—there's his letter left for signature, and only wanting half an hour to post time. I wonder who is to pick up the coals?"

Leonard wondered too—but he thought he had better offer his assistance. Fortunately the porter came in, and saved him the trouble.

Mr. Mills turned to his desk—swore at the unsigned letter—then turned back and swore at the porter—and finally to make all comfortable swore at himself. At last he drew back

the green curtain, and peeped at Leonard on the other side of the desk.

"I say, Mr. Warrenne!"

"Well, Mr. Mills," said Leonard, smiling at the wrinkled visage presented so suddenly to his view.

"I wish you would step into the yard, and see if that Mr. Courtenay is coming back to sign his letter," (another oath.)

"I will go and ask him if you like it," said Leonard, laying down his pen.

It was a pleasant task to have to address a young man who could not treat him with common civility;—but Leonard was a philosopher. He walked into the yard where all three gentlemen were playing noisily with the Newfoundland dog. It was rather difficult to arrest his attention; however, he walked up close to the group, and said, in a distinct voice—

"Mr. Courtenay?"

"Eh!" said Mr. Courtenay, turning suddenly round.

Leonard gave his message.

"Oh! that will do," said Mr. Courtenay, turning away to play with the dog again.

Leonard stood undecided—he had asked a question, and he did not clearly see that he had received an answer—but Mr. Courtenay did not appear to observe that he was waiting.

"I say—about Chiswick," said the military cousin.

"Do you go?" asked Mr. Courtenay.

"Yes—Lady Jane has secured him," said the college cousin with a laugh.

"Lady Jane has a very pretty girl staying with her though," said the military cousin, by way of excuse.

"My dear fellow, there is no reason why you should not be sometimes civil to the woman, though she is your aunt," said Mr. Courtenay drily.

Both the cousins laughed very much at this remark, and the military cousin took up a

piece of stick and threw it into the river; the dog plunged after it, and then the party had to scramble down into a barge to get the animal back again.

Leonard finding it in vain to wait, went back to Mr. Mills. That gentleman was exceedingly indignant when he related what had taken place. He went on grumbling until Mr. Courtenay returned, and then he said, in the crossest tone that he dared to use, that he did not imagine those letters would be in time for the post to-night—but he supposed it did not signify.

"Quite in time," said Mr. Courtenay, affixing his name to the letter, and writing off the other almost as he spoke—"Mr. Cooke had better take them immediately."

He turned his head slightly towards Leonard as he spoke, and folded and sealed without delay.

Mr. Cooke had been the name of Leonard's predecessor; and it was one proof, among

many, of the slight consideration in which he held his inferiors, that Mr. Courtenay could never recollect or apply their names properly. He did not seem to think such people had any business with a name; and it was one of his conditions with his grooms that they should each in succession submit to be called Bob—that having been the name of his first groom.

Mr. Warrenne, sir, is engaged in particular business," said Mr. Mills shortly.

"Eh? he had better go, I think," said Mr. Courtenay, very quietly, but in a tone that seemed to leave no opening for dispute.

"There then, Mr. Warrenne," said Mr. Mills, sullenly, putting the letters in his hand, "if they are too late, they can go four days hence and that is some comfort."

Mr. Courtenay did not condescend to hear this observation; he took up his stick, adjusted his hat, and went out fastening his gloves to the tune of the Redowa Polka.

CHAPTER VI.

Lav.—And then we might pursue our projects and our devices towards my Lady Annabella—go to, there's a conceit newly landed.—*The Honest Man's Fortune.*

Dor.—Strange secrets, sir,
Should not be made so cheap to strangers.
Beaumont and Fletcher.

The only amusement, and almost the only occupation, that Leonard enjoyed, out of his daily business, was that of writing home. When he returned from the office he was too tired, both in body and mind, to exert himself; he seldom cared to draw or to study, and he generally spent his evenings on the sofa with a French or German novel in his hand, unless he had a letter to begin or to finish to Maud.

In these letters it may be supposed that Mr. Courtenay, with his ungracious manners, was not spared. Leonard, in common with many people who have a morbid touch of melancholy in their composition, had a keen sense of the ridiculous, and a considerable fund of humour; and Maud, though highly indignant, often laughed heartily at his pictures of Mr. Courtenay and the other clerks. Leonard had plenty of time to make himself familiar with the original of his portrait. Mr. Courtenay, who had been absent abroad during the first few weeks of his servitude, now came to the office almost every day—overlooked the clerks —worked, or not, as his humour dictated—dispatched everything he undertook with an ease that was perfectly surprising, and regularly called Leonard "Mr. Cooke." Whenever he did this, Mr. Mills seized the first opportunity of his absence to take an angry pinch of snuff, and to say in his bitterest manner—

"Almost time, I think, that he found out your name, Mr. Warrenne."

Leonard merely laughed; he had been galled at first by Mr. Courtenay's contempt; but he now began to see it in a ludicrous point of view, and it rather served to divert him. Still he daily bowed when Mr. Courtenay entered, and as regularly his courtesy was disregarded — but he persevered, because he thought it proper to do so; just as a sailor bows to the quarter-deck, though he never expects it to return his salutation.

Meanwhile he learned a few particulars respecting Mr. Courtenay and his family, from Mr. Mills, who seemed to know all the concerns, both public and private, of Mr. Thomason, and every one of his relations.

Mr. Courtenay was the son of a gentleman of large landed property in the West of England, which he had involved, through the most unprincipled extravagance, so deeply as to render its value almost nominal. The

eldest son had followed closely in the father's footsteps; and everything was going very nicely towards the Queen's Bench, when Mr. Thomason, having no son of his own, offered to take his younger nephew into partnership—he was shrewd enough to see that nothing could be done for the elder one: That hopeful gentleman, however, provided for himself, a few months after his brother had accepted Mr. Thomason's magnificent offer, by a severe fall in a steeple chase, which so far deranged his intellects as to make it needful to place him under restraint. This melancholy condition lasted for a time, and then the injury he had received developed itself in a more decided manner, and at length carried him off. The father grown older, and sobered by the death of his favourite son, no longer indulged in such reckless extravagance; and Mr. Courtenay, ever since he had been in Mr. Thomason's house, had devoted a large part of his income to paying off the incumbrances on his father's

property, which now, Mr. Mills believed, was in a fair way to be altogether cleared; so that he did not see at all why there should be no talk of a marriage hetween Mr. Courtenay and his cousin, Miss Thomason. She was a great match, so was Mr. Courtenay; and Mr. Mills, (or his informant) induced to think there was a great neglect of duty somewhere, that these two fortunes were not brought together. Who was Mr. Mills's informant, Leonard never did or could discover.

Leonard saw no more of the college cousin; but the military cousin, being quartered in the Tower, which was very near, frequently stepped in to waste Mr. Courtenay's time, or to entice him on some party of pleasure.

It was a habit of Mr. Courtenay's when any friends came to see him, to talk to them quite as unreservedly before his clerks, as if he had received them in a private room. This might, perhaps, arise from an idea that that class of people are unprovided with ears, or

probably from a notion that they could not understand his topics of conversation. Now Leonard had always felt a very strong and foolish desire to enter the army; he was well aware that his father's means rendered this impossible, but he was not the less interested in every thing connected with the service. The visits of the military cousin were always an agreeable variety for him—for then he heard all the gossip about the cousin's regiment—all the scrapes and difficulties, and tricks about money matters—all the sporting transactions—all the lamps and windows that they broke, or wished to break, and all the promotions and exchanges.

Leonard had sense and integrity enough to perceive that the cousin, in common with a good many of his associates, was a happy mixture of the knave and fool; but still he was an officer, and when for mysterious reasons, he appeared in that phase of costume called undress, he thought him more than commonly

amusing. It sometimes staggered the reverance he naturally felt inclined to pay to so brilliant a member of society, to observe that Mr. Courtenay's disdain for the clerks, was *nothing* compared to the abrupt contempt he evinced continually for his cousin and his companions in arms. He looked down upon them so excessively and so very openly, that Leonard wondered how they could at all submit to his society.

One morning the military cousin happened to be in the office, waiting for Mr. Courtenay (who was signing some papers,) and pulling about every thing that came under his fingers, in a way that is common to the sex, but which is carried to perfection by officers. When he had demolished four pens and three sheets of blotting paper, and made a little pool of ink on Mr. Mills's desk, Mr. Courtenay turned mildly to him and said,—

"I almost think you had better put your hands in your pockets."

"Well then, when will you have done?" asked the cousin, yawning.

"Impossible to say exactly, when you are in the way—you always contrive to disturb one. The other letter, Mr. Mills."

Mr. Mills reached the letter for Mr. Courtenay to sign, and laid it down in the little pool of ink before-mentioned.

"Some of your handiwork," said Mr. Courtenay to his cousin, as he lifted up the blotted sheet;—here, Mr. Mills, let Mr. Cooke make a copy of this paper immediately. It cannot go in that state!"

"Mr. Warrenne has to go through those accounts of Simson's people before two o'clock, sir," replied Mr. Mills.

Mr. Courtenay replied only by a slight nod of the head, which seemed to confirm his order. Leonard took the paper from Mr. Mills, and began transcribing it with all the composure of a philosopher. The cousin stared stupidly on, as if he had a vague idea that he had done

some mischief, and was determined not to be ashamed of it. Mr. Mills uttered a low grumbling noise which he did not venture to put into words.

"I say," remarked the cousin, while Mr. Courtenay was waiting for the letter, "I want you to come down the river with me, as soon as you have finished that stupid stuff."

"With pleasure," returned Mr. Courtenay, "if you will have the goodness to keep your friend Taylor out of my way."

"Taylor!" exclaimed the cousin. "The best fellow in the world."

"The very best—but he does not quite suit me. I really cannot undertake to laugh at his bad jokes, and he is never quiet. Ten minutes of Taylor would knock me up for the day."

"Well, I will get him to take an oar—and then he will not be so noisy."

"Thank you very much. Is young Osborne still in town?"

"I believe so—I saw him the other day."

"Then get him—he amuses me."

"I am sure *he* is noisy enough," said the cousin.

"Yes, my dear friend—but there are so many different kinds of noise;" remarked Mr. Courtenay drily.

"I say—did you dance with Florence Reynolds the other night!" asked the cousin.

"I—no. I asked her, but she was engaged."

"What do you think of her?"

"A beautiful creature—but an arrant flirt."

"Oh! that does not matter—I like her the better for that."

"How deep a consolation it would be to her," remarked Mr. Courtenay, mildly, "if she did but know your opinion."

"O'Neill is wild about her," said the cousin.

"Yes—I thought he seemed struck," said

Mr. Courtenay, "he danced with her half the evening."

"He is what some people call a fine man!" said the cousin angrily.

"Yes—there is plenty of him," returned Mr. Courtenay, drily.

This retort had the effect of soothing the ruffled plumes of the cousin.

"Did you know," asked the cousin, "that O'Neill was one of the five?"

"The five?" repeated Mr. Courtenay, "I don't quite understand you. Some technical term I dare say—you soldiers are so clever!"

"Not at all," remarked the cousin, with much truth, "I mean that he is one of the five who have laid a bet that they will marry Miss Reynolds—five hundred to be paid to the winner on the wedding day."

Leonard found it very difficult to keep silence—for anything more degrading than this arrangement, more opposed to the spirit of a gentleman, or even of a man, could hardly be

conceived. And though he often repeated to himself, that Miss Reynolds had by her own conduct put an end to the interest he should always have cherished for her, yet he never heard her name without a quicker beating of the heart. And he had not even the satisfaction of seeing the tranquil glance of contempt with which Mr. Courtenay surveyed his cousin from head to foot.

"And are you one of this respectable party?" asked Mr. Courtenay.

"No, but Taylor is—it was Le Grange who set it going."

"And the others?" said Mr. Courtenay, with increasing contempt. "Let us have the names of the whole gang!"

"Roxby and the Count de Merville," replied the cousin; "but you don't seem to like it. I believe you want to be one yourself—is not it a capital idea?"

"It is very military," returned Mr. Courtenay, quietly.

"How do you mean?" asked the puzzled cousin.

"Anything but civil, that is all, my dear friend," returned Mr. Courtenay, receiving the letter from Mr. Mills, which Leonard had just finished copying.

"And O'Neill did not tell you," said the cousin; "I thought he told you everything."

"Not quite everything," replied Mr. Courtenay; there are a few subjects on which he knows that we should differ."

"Mrs. Ashton, for instance," said the cousin, laughing.

"Exactly," replied Courtenay.

"Did he tell you?" asked the cousin.

"Tell me what?" returned Courtenay.

"That she was dead."

"I am glad of it!" said Courtenay, in his briefest tone.

"Why?" asked the cousin.

"Bah! do you think I can explain to *you?*" said Courtenay, impatiently.

"If you are glad," said the cousin, "it is more than he was. I never saw a fellow so cut up in my life."

"Cut up! What did he do it for?" said Courtenay, sharply. "If there is one thing more pitiful than another, it is remorse."

"But you are such a fellow," said the cousin, in an apologetic tone; "you must not expect every one to be such a Potiphar as yourself."

Mr. Courtenay looked at his cousin very earnestly for a few moments, in the hope of extracting some meaning from his last remark. He likewise tried to remember in what single particular his character or conduct resembled that of Pharoah's chief captain; but finding it to be a vain attempt, he said quietly, "I am at your service now, if you have a mind to go up the river this morning."

As soon as the door closed upon the cousins, Mr. Mills relieved his feelings in the usual way. With many oaths, he declared

that he would give warning—he would resign; *he* who had been upwards of forty years in the house! The partners would be very sorry for it afterwards; but he could not, and he would not, do his work if every jackanapes were allowed to come into the office, and chatter while he was making his calculations.

Leonard turned aside his anger by a jest, and applied himself to his own business, which, to say the truth, the name of Miss Reynolds had always power to interrupt, and which had been moreover thrown back by the awkwardness of the military cousin. He had one comfort, however—he knew her enemies—he might, perhaps, one day, though she despised his aid, be really of use to her. He might yet be able to step in between her and her mercenary and fraudulent adversaries. How gladly would he have called out the whole five! But he knew that in his situation he might call, but they would not be likely to come when "he did call for them!"

He was not able to go to dinner, owing to the time lost in copying the blotted letter; but for this *contre-temps* (which, by the way, happened often enough from one slight cause or other) he forgave Mr. Courtenay with all his heart. "I declare," he thought, "I half like the proud fellow; he despises those five rascals as much as I do myself."

CHAPTER VII.

Sir W.—I am glad so slight
His power—I know him for a profligate
With broken coffers, to replenish which
He merely follows her.

Sheridan Knowles.

Maud's letters soon confirmed the news which Leonard had heard at the office, respecting Miss Reynolds's stay in town. A young lady who had been her schoolfellow, was about to be married, and the mother had invited Florence to spend a few weeks with her daughter previous to the ceremony. It was an opportunity for extending her conquests that she was not likely to neglect. She detested the compara-

tive solitude of Erlesmede, which she bore without complaining, only because she anticipated the time, at no distant period, when her father would return and place her at the head of a brilliant establishment, as a preliminary to her moving off into a still more brilliant establishment of her own.

The five honourable gentlemen mentioned by the military cousin were always in her train; for that sort of people seem to scent an heiress with all the hungry keenness of a jackall; —and she might have reasonably flattered herself that they would any one of them have offered to her at a moment's notice. But with one exception, they met with little encouragement to be so bold.

Mr. Taylor was a noisy, hearty, jocose man, whom she especially abhorred;—the Count De Merville she had known before, and after a very close siege to his heart, had confessed to herself that his only object was her fortune. Mr. Roxby was a keen sportsman, who could

hardly feign an interest in any living creature except his horse—and Captain Le Grange was a pale haggard-looking gamester, who scarcely made it a secret that he lived by his wits. But Captain O'Neill, with the gallantry of manner common to the Irish, aided by a fine person, and that unmeaning arrogance of deportment often seen in his profession, contrived to impress Florence more favourably than his accomplices. And he possessed this great advantage over the other suitors, that he was, from the first moment of seeing Florence, thoroughly in earnest. For her grace and beauty and the soft fascination of her manner, had converted, what was begun as a capital speculation, into a sudden and passionate attachment. And fate could prepare no fitter retribution for this unprincipled knave than to throw in his way such a woman as Miss Reynolds, who inspired him with his first respectable attachment, at the same time that her splendid expectations held out to him the soothing prospect of relief from the

dishonest embarrassment of his numerous debts.

Florence was extremely vain of this triumph —for he was a man of the world, and a bad subject, and therefore the last person likely to be thoroughly enslaved.

But much as Florence enjoyed her absence from the sober village of Erlesmede, perhaps Maud Warrenne enjoyed it still more. Her intercourse with Mrs. Creswick was now perfectly unrestrained—she could go to the house without the chance of encountering Miss Reynolds, and being chilled by her cold enquiries. Mrs. Creswick was one of those very rare characters who at once divest every one of all external circumstances, and judge them simply by the qualities they may chance to possess. Civil to all her acquaintance, she never gave her confidence or her affection to any one whom she had not reason to believe actuated by strong principle and kind feeling. Careless even of high birth where it was not accompa-

nied by noble qualities, she was still more inexorable to the accident of wealth. She never could be made to comprehend why persons who had grown rich by the humblest pursuits, should be welcomed into society, unless they were distinguished by their talents or their benevolence. The little Colonel, who was quite beside himself at the sight of a lord, and who doted on every body who kept a large establishment, although he never dared to oppose "Dearest Madam" directly in any of her views, yet he contrived to have a much more extended and motley visiting list at the Ferns, than if its direction had been left solely in her hands.

The unremitting attention of Maud to her sister Alice, first attracted Mrs. Creswick to her character. She knew that it must be at the expense of some effort, and some self-denial, that she regularly and patiently, day by day, instructed Alice in languages, in history and the more simple and useful branches

of female education; so that Alice, though blind, knew more history than most girls; could speak French and German, and understand them when read, and was a very fair arithmetician. For Music, in which she excelled remarkably, Mr. Warrenne had afforded her the instruction of a master from a cathedral town not far off. Unfortunately, Mrs. Creswick, so sensitive to the performance of any duty, had frequently pointed out to Florence the conduct of Maud Warrenne, as worthy of imitation, and laboured, but in vain, to impress upon her the deep responsibility of every human life.

Florence merely replied, in her sweetest tone, that as she had not a pretty little blind sister to patronize, she hardly saw how she could walk exactly in the footsteps of Miss Warrenne; and that she trusted her dear aunt did not desire the imitation to extend to minor affairs, as she had always rather preferred

her own style of dress, to that of the young lady in question.

Mrs. Creswick happened to join to great enthusiasm of feeling, a remarkable quantity of plain sense in acting; a union so rare as to be hardly ever found, and so fortunate, as to command success in most instances. She saw immediately that she had made a mistake in praising Maud; and another mistake in supposing her neice at the present time capable of improvement. She knew that sometimes it is good to *wait*; and so, however fit the occasion, however urgent the need seemed, she resolutely abstained from saying a word more to Florence.

It was drawing near to the first of September. Colonel Creswick always filled his house for that important day; and Florence's unwilling return was in some measure soothed by the knowledge that Captain O'Neill was to accompany his friend, Mr. Courtenay, to the Ferns, on a visit of a week or ten days.

The day of their arrival—they were expected to dinner—she made as costly a toilet as if she were going out to a large party. Among her many accomplishments she knew exactly when a man values dress, and in what degree. She knew that Captain O'Neill was guilty of the vulgarism of delighting in fine clothes, to a degree seldom seen except among men brought up in a mercer's shop; and as he was her present object, she sacrificed her own knowledge on the matter, to his taste.

Mrs. Creswick felt rather astonished when her niece swam into the room, wearing a costly black lace tunic, over a pink satin dress —a splended Indian fan hanging from her arm, a gold pomander-box swinging at her side, and jewellery in great abundance wherever it could be worn. She made no observation, however, being aware, from frequent experience, that it would have no effect; but turned her silent, searching eyes upon her gaudy decorations. Florence, however, was

secure in such a dazzling purity of complexion, that no possible mixture of colour could disturb its exquisite tints. Her beauty was less faultless, but more theatrical, only in its effect, than if she had been dressed with more taste and simplicity.

Colonel Creswick, advancing sideways towards her, said that he saw his fair niece was armed for conquest that evening, and she would be, as usual, irresistible. Florence, looking up from her low seat, was in the act of making some pleased rejoinder, when the guests entered.

Captain O'Neill was at her side directly, whispering compliments and protestations, and other fragments, in the most impassioned manner. It is surprising how eloquent love makes a man; and when he is deeply in debt into the bargain he is never at a loss for something to say to an heiress.

"You have not been introduced to my niece, Mr. Courtenay, I think," said Mrs. Creswick.

"No; I believe I have not been named to her;" said Mr. Courtenay carelessly. "I had the pleasure of meeting her once at Mrs. Thomason's."

"Let me present you," said Mrs. Creswick; and the ceremony was performed — Florence bowing slightly, without interrupting her conversation with Captain O'Neill. Mr. Courtenay turned away without again regarding her, and began to talk to the Colonel about shooting. Florence lent a still more attentive ear to the platitudes of her companion; but the indifference of Mr. Courtenay occupied all her thoughts. Not even to look at her—to stand absorbed by the Colonel's history of his wonderful pointer, Diana, and then to fall into conversation with her aunt, drawing the corner of his chair forward so that he almost turned his back upon Florence. She was not used to it! Captain O'Neill's London anecdotes, and his fine protestations could not make amends for this. Her finery seemed to her suddenly out of

place, too. There was something in the stern calmness of Mr. Courtenay's air, that looked as if he would so thoroughly despise the glittering pretension of her toilette. And though a more practised judge of character might detect just a little touch of foppery in the rigid plainness of his own attire, she felt at a glance how superior was the one extreme to the other.

"We have not met, Mr. Courtenay, since you first joined your uncle," said Mrs. Creswick, "you remember the time, I dare say."

"I do—six years ago—it was at the house of Sir George Manning—the father of Sir Frederick. That was an era I shall not easily forget."

"I dare say not. Are you at all interested in your employment?"

"Why, I had rather be following the hounds, as far as my taste goes; but that would not exactly answer my purpose."

"You would not be a mere sportsman, Mr. Courtenay?"

"Why, no. A man with a single idea must always be a distressing spectacle; a mere lawyer, or a mere philosopher, are quite as great a bore to their friends as a mere sportsman, Mrs. Creswick."

"You are not changed, I find," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling.

"No; do people change? That is a phenomenon I have never yet witnessed; but then I have never yet happened to take any man for more than he was worth."

"Have you been equally successful with horses?" asked Colonel Creswick, as dinner was announced.

"Not invariably," said Mr. Courtenay, laughing, and giving Mrs. Creswick his arm; "tradition does say that I was once grievously taken in."

"You must tell me something about Ada Thomason," said Mrs. Creswick as they took their places at table; "she was such a pretty child."

"Was she? when I first knew her she was cutting her teeth wrong, and looked very shabby; but she has grown up better than I expected; in fact she is rather handsome now."

"Who is handsome?" asked Captain O'Neill, rousing himself at the word.

"Can't you mind your own business," said Mr. Courtenay; "I was speaking of Ada Thomason."

"Oh! very handsome—in a certain style, that is to say," said Captain O'Neill turning to Florence.

"Handsome and rich—two great trials," remarked Mrs. Creswick.

"And very well she bears them," said Courtenay; "except that they make her very indolent, I don't know that they do her any harm."

"She is a favourite of yours, Mr. Courtenay."

"Reasonably—we are sworn friends. You

need not look me through, as if I had a wedding-ring in my waistcoat pocket."

"How very like," said Mrs. Creswick, musing.

"Like myself, I hope; pray allow me to be incomparable — it is the only simile that I covet."

"Yes, I was going to say, like what you were. Thank you, I shall gladly resign the chickens into your hands."

While Mr. Courtenay was carving, Florence tried to attract his attention by making some whimsical demands upon his services for her poodle. He sent her what she wanted, scarcely replied to her smiling apologies, and then renewed his conversation with Mrs. Creswick. The dinner passed. Captain O'Neill devoted to Florence—Mr. Courtenay, as before, calm, indifferent, amusing; seeming, as much as it was possible for a man at all used to good breeding, to forget the very presence of Miss Reynolds.

She rose from the table thoroughly vexed. It was very well to have Captain O'Neill at her feet, but that was no reason why she should not make Mr. Courtenay miserable. Besides, the delight of having two men in the house furiously jealous of each other; which pleasure she must forego if he went on in that negligent manner.

His cool way of asking her, at dessert, if she liked candied apricots, was too much; and then turning to Mrs. Creswick, almost before he had heard her reply, to remark that he feared Madame Laffarge would send preserved apricots out of fashion. And then her aunt, taking up the conversation in her wise way, and lamenting the publicity that is now afforded to every detail in the life of a great criminal; so like her! — so pedantic! And Florence sank back in an arm chair the moment she reached the drawing-room, too sullen to speak, read, or work.

The arrival of the gentlemen was a relief

both to the aunt and niece—tea and coffee occupied a certain time, and then Captain O'Neill and Florence sat down to a game of chess.

"I declare I'm half afraid!" said Florence, looking prettily from Captain O'Neill to Mr. Courtenay. "Is he a very good player?"

"A very bold player, Miss Reynolds—so take care of yourself," replied Mr. Courtenay, drily, as he crossed to Mrs. Creswick.

"Does not that fine work try your eyes horribly?" he asked—looking down upon some beautiful bead work on which she was employed.

"No—I have an excellent sight—for which I am very thankful," replied Mrs. Creswick. "You know, I conclude the contents of your father's letter!" she added.

"Perfectly. Poor man, since my brother's death, he has been occupied by that one idea—to get me married. You can't think how much

I was obliged to him for sending me here—it was exactly the place I wished to visit."

"And which of us may appropriate that compliment?" asked Mrs. Creswick, smiling.

"Nay," said Mr. Courtenay, dropping the sarcastic tone that was too familiar to him, "you know I am always pleased to find myself in your society—but I will confess to you, that another motive brought me here at this time. You were my mother's friend—be mine!—I have reason to believe that there is a young lady in this neighbourhood whom I greatly desire to meet."

"And her name?" said Mrs. Creswick, smiling at the abruptness with which he plunged into his subject.

"That I do not know," he replied.

"My dear Mr. Courtenay, I would do the impossible to oblige you, but really—a nameless beauty!"

"There cannot be the least difficulty in finding her out," said Mr. Courtenay, in his

quick firm manner, "she has, or had, a blind sister."

"Maud Warrenne, then, I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Creswick, who entered with all the zeal of a young girl into the strange confidence Mr. Courtenay was reposing in her.

"Maud Warrenne! I like the name very much," said Mr. Courtenay, coolly,—"yes, I'm quite satisfied with her name."

"And what is your object, Mr. Courtenay?"

"To marry her, if she has no particular objection."

"You are then acquainted with her?"

"Not in the least!"

"You have met her somewhere?"

"Once—on the King's Highway."

"Do you know who she is?"

"Not at all—but I think I know *what* she is."

'She is the daughter of our medical man."

"Is she? That is a matter of perfect indifference to me."

"Mr. Courtenay is coming out in a new character," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling, "that of a perfect hero of romance."

"My dear Mrs. Creswick, don't be deceived by appearances," said Mr. Courtenay, drily, "I leave romance, and its consequences, to my friend O'Neill."

"Eh?" said that gentleman, looking round at the mention of his own name.

"I said you were occasionally in the habit of acting little romances, my dear friend;" said Mr. Courtenay.

"He means 'proverbs,'" said Captain O'Neill, turning with a puzzled look to Florence; "but I declare to you, I have not acted in one for a year or more."

"Oh! never mind what he said, Captain O'Neill;" returned Florence, shrugging her shoulders, "nothing I am sure, worth inter-

rupting our game to listen to—that castle of yours looks so tempting!"

"She is piqued, and I could have her;" thought Mr. Courtenay, watching the angry gesture of Florence; "but thank Heaven, I have something a little better than that in prospect!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Mich.————She is fair and young and wealthy,
Infinite wealthy—and as gracious too
In all her entertainments as men report.
Beaumont and Fletcher.

Maud was very busy among her flowers the next morning, with Karl following to pick up litters in his barrow, and Alice seated within talking distance in the arbour, making a net for the fruit trees, while Ondine flew from one to the other, sometimes thrusting her cold nose into Karl's rough hand, and sometimes springing perversely upon the very

flowers that Maud was tying up, when Mrs. Creswick stepped out of her grounds, and crossing over to the green gate at the bottom of the Warrenne's garden, looked over, and called to the girls—

"Who will be so kind as to let me in?" said she.

Maud flew to the gate.

Certainly, if at any one time she did look more charming than another, it was when gardening, in her broad-leafed straw hat, with her high pink morning dress, and little white collar. The fresh and intelligent simplicity of her countenance, and the animation of her gestures, seemed so completely in character with her rustic occupation; and, from living so much alone, neither sister had the manners or phrases current in society, which will be accounted shocking or charming, according as people love or hate, admire or despise, what is commonly called The World.

"Mrs. Creswick is quite *matinale*," said

Maud, opening wide the green gate for her friend, with a little mocking courtesy.

"Because Mrs. Creswick is come on business," said that lady, stepping cheerfully in.

"With papa?"

"No; with you. I wish you to come and drink tea with me this evening."

Maud hesitated. "If you were quite alone, my dear Mrs. Creswick; but I think that now your house is full of company."

"And do you know, that is the very reason I have asked you?" returned Mrs. Creswick. "You are, I think, my dear Maud, eighteen this very month, and up to this time you have seen actually no society."

"You know we keep no company," said Maud.

"Yes, my dear, with that arrangement I have nothing to do; but I should like to show you a little company notwithstanding; for I have observed that people who live very secluded, form altogether a wrong estimate of

society. You must see by experience of what very coarse materials the world is made, before you will actually believe it; and then you will learn to value properly the few exceptions you find, and to treat with proper indifference those slights which sensitive people are apt to magnify."

"I am sure I feel your kindness," said Maud. "I can leave Alice very well for a single evening."

"But, remember, if Alice will come, I shall be delighted to see her," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Oh! not me please, Mrs. Creswick," said Alice. "I should feel so uncomfortable in a strange room."

"Well, I shall leave it open," said Mrs. Creswick; "Alice has plenty of time before her; but I shall expect you, recollect, at eight o'clock."

As Alice was quite immoveable on the subject, indeed she almost came to tears when her papa urged her to make the effort, Maud was obliged to go alone to the Ferns.

A sense of shyness made her rather later than the time appointed by Mrs. Creswick, and when she arrived, she found herself turned alone into a room full of ladies and and gentlemen.

Mrs. Creswick was seated at the farther end of the room, listening to Mr. Courtenay, with her usual earnest and breathless expression. It was not very easy to thread her way through the groups that were scattered between her and the lady of the house; but Maud's shyness was not of that sort which implies any loss of self-possession. It was rather a reluctance to mix with people who she felt would look down upon her. Her apprehensions would have been much diminished, had she known beforehand that people would have disregarded her as absolutely as if she had been invisible. She was not in their set; they were not supposed to be aware of her presence. It was therefore less easy to get to Mrs. Creswick than if they had

known she was in the room, and had made way for her.

But Mr. Courtenay, after watching her efforts for a few moments, said something to Mrs. Creswick, who rose at once, and came towards her with quick noiseless steps.

Miss Reynolds, in a beautiful evening dress of pink crape was seated in a low chair playing with her dog, and talking to Captain O'Neill, who was seated beside her. She found out by this time that Maud was in the room, and having stared at her for a minute, made her a slight bow, and turned to her companion.

"Do you think her pretty, Captain O'Neill?"

"Why, it may be my taste," said he, with perfect gravity; "but it occurs to me that she is much too thin."

"Oh, you are so fastidious!" returned Florence, looking up to him with a laugh; "but I assure you I have heard her called pretty by several people in the neighbourhood."

"Indeed! that must have been by those who had never seen *you*," he said.

"Oh, fie!" returned Florence.

"You will sing now, won't you?" he asked.

"Oh! if *you* wish it; but my singing is not worth hearing," she replied with much diffidence of manner.

Captain O'Neill replied by a glance of intense admiration. He was very skilful in looks, and they were altogether a safer medium for him than words, as he had not yet acquired an accurate knowledge of the English language, which he managed to eke out with sundry scraps of French, picked up while hanging about Paris for a few weeks at a time.

Maud, who had been edified by their remarks on her person, for they had not found it necessary to control their voices in speaking of her, now addressed a sentence apiece to the two young ladies nearest to her, which was returned by a brief and chilling monosyllable.

Mrs. Creswick was obliged to attend to her other guests, and after having named Maud to the two young ladies before-mentioned, she imagined that they would afford her a share of their conversation, instead of which they huddled together, laughing and whispering, occasionally favouring Maud with a broad stare. Those people who think this could not occur in society, have never happened to be thrown into company with young women who consider some other young women decidedly their inferior. Meantime, Florence allowed Captain O'Neill to lead her to the piano, and entrusted to him her bouquet and embroidered handkerchief, while she scrambled over the keys. She had a sweet voice, but so imperfect an ear, that she could not sing anything in tune—and any one less conceited than herself, would never have ventured to perform in company. Maud noticed with some amusement that she seemed by no means contented with the assiduous homage of Captain O'Neill, but

suffered her eyes to wander with a restless expression towards Mr. Courtenay, who stood leaning on the corner of the chimney-piece, surveying the company with a calm and ironical glance. Maud perceived a slight smile pass over his face as Miss Reynolds brought to a conclusion one of her elaborate flourishes—a smile that seemed to be expressive rather of contempt than of gratification for the performance.

"Is your friend musical, Captain O'Neill?" asked Florence, directing her eyes again to Mr. Courtenay as soon as she had finished her song.

"I hardly know what he is fond of—he cares for nothing I think—I never saw such a fellow!" said Captain O'Neill laughing.

"How different from you!" said Florence looking up in his face with her winning expression. "You are so enthusiastic!"

This, being as far as possible from the truth, was very gratifying to Captain O'Neill's

feelings. He smiled and plumed himself, and allowed that in that respect he was very different from his friend. For any one might see, by his countenance, that he was violent and irrational; but enthusiasm is kindled out of altogether a finer kind of clay than that in which he was moulded.

Florence, once at the piano, was not easily dislodged; after the song she favoured the company with a waltz, and after that divers other dance-music, to all which Captain O'Neill listened with great delight, leaning over her and whispering the greater part of the time. Mr. Courtenay, still leaning on the chimney-piece, continued to survey the company with that keen glance from which their is no escape.

Mrs. Creswick passed close to him.

"I wish you would sit down, Mrs. Creswick, you are tired;" he said, "the Colonel is surely civil enough for two. Do rest a little!"

"You see what I have done in bringing her ere," said Mrs. Creswick, glancing towards

Maud, who was looking over a book of engravings alone. "I cannot alter it. Florence sets the fashion among the young people. If she were more gracious, they would follow her example."

"A vulgar set, evidently," said the young man, sending round a quiet glance of contempt; "she must find it disagreeable to mix with them, I should think. What would they have, in Heaven's name? Is not her descent good enough? One would think in these days people's veins ought to run gold, instead of the blue blood of the old Spaniards. But I am going to make her acquaintance."

"I have been admiring your forbearance," said Mrs. Creswick; you have not yet addressed a word to her."

"I have been watching her instead," returned Mr. Courtenay. I never saw anything so elegant; and I am excessively glad to see by the carriage of her head that she is very proud."

"Pray let me hear you retract that opinion before you go," said Mrs. Creswick.

"I am quite sorry I cannot oblige you, but it is my pet failing," he replied, crossing the room as he spoke.

He drew a chair close to Maud, and said by way of beginning the conversation, in a dry, quiet tone, "You live just over the way, don't you?"

"Yes," said Maud, looking up from her book, rather surprised by this time that any one could address a word to her, except Mrs. Creswick, without feeling degraded by the effort.

"Will you sing presently?" he asked.

"I never sing."

"Is that quite literal?"

"Quite, as regards society."

"Come, you sing at home; that is a concession."

Maud smiled a little, and her eyes sparkled; she was amused by his manner.

"You think nobody here worth singing to; that is the fact."

"Mrs. Creswick is worth singing to," said Maud; but she can hear me when we are alone."

"Now," said he, clasping his hands slowly together, and leaning them upon her book of engravings, "do you recollect me?"

Maud lifted her long eyelashes, and looked at him for a moment, then she smiled, her colour deepened—she hesitated, and said—

"I—I remember somebody very like you; but it was a long time ago."

"And a restive horse, eh?" said he, quickly.

"Yes," returned Maud; "how frightened we were!"

"You, and your sister; was it not?" he added, rapidly.

"Yes."

"But you were as bold as a lion you know; it was your sister who was timid!"

"Oh! you don't know how you frightened

us both," said Maud smiling; I have hardly got over it yet."

"Pray, did you recognise my accomplice on that occasion?" said Courtenay, nodding towards Captain O'Neill.

Maud turned round, and looked indifferently at him. "No," she said, "was he of the party?"

"To be sure! Come, I'm glad that you remembered *me*."

"Not till you reminded me of it," said Maud.

"Oh! by-the-way, just introduce me, Mrs. Creswick," said he, as that lady passed.

"Mr. Courtenay—Miss Warrenne."

Maud closed her beautiful lips with a total change of expression. She saw before her the Courtenay of Leonard's letters.

But he was not to be deterred in the slightest degree by her coldness—he cared little which way it was—he "never said fail!"

"Do you admire Miss Reynolds' singing,"

he asked, by way of keeping up the conversation.

Not so much, replied Maud, quietly, as many other things that she does."

"Perhaps you will enlighten me on the subject of her accomplishments;" he said. "I have been two days in the house, without finding them out."

"She dances beautifully, and paints flowers very well," replied Maud.

"From nature?"

"Yes."

"That is something; do you also draw from nature?"

"Yes; but landscapes—not flowers."

"And how is your sister?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Maud, with increasing coldness.

"She is still blind?" he asked.

"Still."

"Dear me; that is a pity."

"You think so?"

"And do not you?"

"Perhaps I think it something more than a pity," said Maud.

"Ah! I am not in the habit of using strong expressions."

"I can readily believe it."

"And why, again?"

"Because warm expressions are generally the result of warm feelings."

Now it is a common thing for people to abuse themselves, and then to be very angry that you take them at their word.

Courtenay looked piqued, and said with a slight cough,—

"Ladies seldom give a man credit for feeling, unless he can rant like a player!"

"So that once in a hundred times, ladies commit an injustice," returned Maud.

"Then you admit that the thing can happen as an exception?" said Courtenay.

"Yes, when a man stammers," returned Maud.

He smiled, and regarded her earnestly, but Maud was too proud to feel embarrassed, even at the piercing glance of Mr. Courtenay; for few things make a person so proud as the feeling that society has assigned to them a wrong position.

Florence was at this moment passing from the piano close to them. Mr. Courtenay turned round and said drily,—

"Thank you, very much, Miss Reynolds."

"Oh! it is no pleasure to play to you," returned Florence, "you never praise one!"

"Perhaps then, you will induce Miss Warrenne to take your place—she does not want praise."

"You are mightily acquainted with Miss Warrenne in this short time," exclaimed Florence; "perhaps she is equally well acquainted with you, through her brother. I have no doubt he has given you a nice character."

Maud was silent.

"Silence gives consent!" said Florence, triumphantly.

"Silence does nothing of the kind in my opinion," said Mr. Courtenay; "silence merely looks very handsome."

Florence bit her lip, and glanced contemptuously at Maud, who stood blushing and silent, wondering how Miss Reynolds happened so very nearly to hit upon the truth.

"But I don't think I have the pleasure of knowing a brother of yours," said Mr. Courtenay, looking at Maud.

"You do *not* know him, I believe," said Maud, coldly; "he is in Mr. Thomason's employ."

"But Mr.—is it possible? Mr. Cooke—I mean Mr. Warrenne, is your brother?" said Mr. Courtenay, hastily.

Maud was silent—she did not care to answer him—all the contempt that he had evinced towards Leonard, was little indeed, compared to that which swelled in her breast at

the recollection of it. She moved away towards Mrs. Creswick, leaving Miss Reynolds to answer his questions as she chose.

"I thought you were talking to her about her brother all this time," said Florence.

"I had not the least idea—not the faintest," said Courtenay, with energy, "that Mr. Warrenne was her brother."

"Dear me—and they are something alike—only he was so much better looking—and how well he waltzed too—he was such a favourite with us all!" said Florence.

She did not seem to like the sudden keenness of Courtenay's glance, for she turned to the table and began to look over a book.

"How came he in a merchant's office, I wonder?" said Courtenay.

"I am sure it is throwing himself away," said Florence, "but I suppose that his father's means were too limited to allow of his entering a profession;—he is very accomplished—you can't think how well he paints."

"Paints, does he?—a sort of Crichton, I suppose?"

"Of course you would laugh at accomplishment in a man—I expected that," returned Florence; "you are so English!"

"English, I hope so; that is just my notion of myself. And this Magnus Apollo, young Warrenne, is then—"

"English, too," said Florence pettishly; "but he has been abroad long enough to lose all the odious characteristics of the nation."

"And what may they be?"

"Oh! they are far too numerous for me to repeat!"

"And what is the topic?" asked Mrs. Creswick, who was crossing the room arm in arm with Maud.

"We are making a display of our patriotism," said Mr. Courtenay, drily.

"Is not he detestable?" exclaimed Florence, turning to Captain O'Neill.

"Because I love my country," said Courtenay.

"That is always the case with people who love nothing else," exclaimed Florence. "I have a horror of patriots."

"What do we say to the example of the Elder Brutus?" asked Mrs. Creswick cheerfully.

"A worthy soul as ever lived," returned Courtenay.

"Oh! I hate him—a wretch!" exclaimed Florence.

Captain O'Neill did not know the Elder Brutus.

"Come, we must have your opinion," said Mrs. Creswick turning with a smile to Maud.

"I think," said she, "there are some situations so difficult that it is impossible to sustain them becomingly. On those occasions you may be good, but you must give up all idea of being beautiful."

Captain O'Neill here whispered to Florence that *she* must, under all circumstance, be beautiful.

"But do you not recognize something

beautiful in the fulfilment of a difficult duty?" said Courtenay; "in the struggle, in the triumph, is there not the high spirit of tragedy?"

Maud raised her eyes, all animation. This was a feeling she understood. Florence looking down on her bouquet was languidly pulling about the leaves.

"But all this while the piano is vacant," said Mrs. Creswick. "Florence my dear."

"Oh! I have done," said Florence, half lifting her eyes, and dropping them again; "and Miss Stapylton has a cold, or something—has not she, Captain O'Neill?"

"Yes; I think she said so," he replied.

"And I hardly think the Mansells play; but you can ask them—if you would, Captain O'Neill?"

It was very pleasant to be appealed to in this way—Captain O'Neill rose, and went to persuade the Mansells.

"You can sing some of Mrs. Hemans's

ballads without your notes," said Mrs. Creswick; "do give us the Roman Girl's Song."

Maud would gladly have obliged Mrs. Creswick in anything great or small—but she caught a glance of Mr. Courtenay's which seemed to say—"You will have to sing after all."

She stopped almost in the act of rising, and said that she never could remember the words of a song; she had rather not attempt it.

"I think I have it somewhere. I wish you would look, Captain O'Neill. You know my music pretty well by this time," said Florence, carelessly.

Mr. Courtenay smiled again.

"I cannot sing it, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud, earnestly. "You know I never can sing unless I choose my own time and place."

"Don't be afraid of me, Miss Warrenne," said Florence, with her usual insolent disregard of her female guests; "for I never listen while music is going on; I always talk."

This was strictly true. Courtenay gave her

a searching glance, anything but complimentary in its character. Captain O'Neill laughed; he was not quick enough to feel her ill-breeding.

At that moment, Miss Warrenne's servant was announced. She rose, and wished Mrs. Creswick good night.

"You had better let me see you home," said Mr. Courtenay, rising also.

"Thank you, I have a servant," replied Maud, as she passed him.

"Good night, then," he said, opening the door for her.

"Nothing I dislike so much as *learned* conversation," said Florence, addressing Captain O'Neill. "My aunt and that young person always get on some wise topic or other; but then, it is very likely that she may be meant for a governess; she is the daughter of our apothecary."

"Very great kindness to admit her here at all, I think," said Captain O'Neill; "it occurred

to me that she was rather presuming in her manners."

"Well, have you escorted Miss Warrenne home?" asked Florence, as Mr. Courtenay returned.

"No; she declined me. It seemed that she had a servant with her."

"Not much choice of servants!" said Florence, with a pretty playful laugh. "I believe that poor cripple comprehends their whole establishment. I should not wonder if he were to cook their dinner, as well as groom their single horse! He must have a good deal of leisure time, don't you think, Captain O'Neill?"

This was witty, and Captain O'Neill laughed very much; for, though he was really poorer than Mr. Warrenne, being overwhelmed with debts, he was not reduced to live in such a miserable way. He kept two or three men servants, and half-a-dozen horses, though how he ever contrived to pay for them, or to keep

them without paying, is known only to Irishmen of his speculative turn.

Now, if Florence had said what she did in an ill-natured tone, she would have disgusted even Captain O'Neill; but say the most bitter things in a friendly, playful manner, and there are very few men who will not be delighted with you.

"I never judge a woman by her conduct to men, but by her manners to her own sex," said Courtenay to Mrs. Creswick. "In the one instance, she is candid; in the other, rarely so."

"I think my young friend is candid in both," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling, as she remembered Maud's coldness to Mr. Courtenay.

"I believe it. Will you contrive that I shall see her to-morrow?"

"Really, Mr. Courtenay, considering your father's object in sending you here," said Mrs. Creswick, smiling, "I shall not advance his views very much by granting your request."

"My dear Mrs. Creswick, it is too absurd (I am sure you agree with me), sending one after a wife in this way; and, happily, your niece and myself are agreed on the point. She dislikes me cordially; and, with all her beauty, I doubt if I am likely to commit suicide for her sake. Do indulge me."

"I will try what I can do to-morrow," said Mrs. Creswick. "I should rather like you to marry Maud Warrenne," she added.

"I should rather like it myself. You are going? Good night!"

"I say, Courtenay," said Captain O'Neill, detaining his friend as he was leaving the room.

"Eh?" said Mr. Courtenay, looking sharp round.

"What *do* you think of her?"

Any one seeing Captain O'Neill's face at that moment would have reason to hope from its earnestness that he was putting a question relative to his salvation.

"Which?" asked Mr. Courtenay, quickly

—"Miss Warrenne, or the other piece of goods?"

"Of course, I mean Miss Reynolds; but really, when you call her 'a piece of goods,' it occurs to me"—

"Exactly," said Mr. Courtenay, interrupting his friend; "so it does to me. She was very smart to night. You like pink don't you? I thought so. She is very pretty, and very rich—and I am very tired. Have you done?"

"No; of course, I wanted to consult you. I always take your advice, you know."

"Naturally. What is it now?"

"Will she have *all* old Reynolds's money?"

"Every sous for anything I know to the contrary; but you can't expect her to carry about a sample of rupees, like a corn-dealer with his oats. She is an only child; but don't be sanguine; believe only in what you see; in the rose-coloured gown, for instance."

"Could you not get out of Mrs. Creswick

how she is situated? Not that I care. I adore her. I think she is the most beautiful creature; but nobody can live on air."

"Not without a good deal of training," said Mr. Courtenay, mildly; "and you would not like the experiment, I dare say."

"And you have positively no intention," said Captain O'Neill.

"None at all. You will have half the county for your rivals; but take courage. *I* am not of the number."

And with these words Mr. Courtenay took up his candle and walked out of the room.

CHAPTER IX.

K. Hen.—I know no ways to mince it in love, but directly to say—I love you. Then, if you urge me further than to say—Do you in faith? I wear out my suit.

King Henry V.

I cannot look greenly, nor gasp out my eloquence, nor have I no cunning in protestation: only downright oaths, which I never use till urged, nor never break for urging.—*Ibid.*

Maud and Alice were fond of spending the fine summer mornings in the arbour at the bottom of the garden, reading and working and sometimes practising their songs; for the place was so secluded that they had no fear of attracting passengers by the sound of their voices. This morning, however, they often

interrupted their studies, to talk over the events of the preceding evening. It seemed as if Alice would never come to an end of her questions. She wanted to have everybody described, and all their sayings repeated.

"And Mr. Courtenay, only think of your meeting the very man of whom Leonard has spoken so often!" said Alice.

"And that he should be the same person who frightened us in the lane when we were children!" said Maud.

"Tell me again all he said to you," said Alice.

"It was not much—I wouldn't talk to him—I despise him so!" exclaimed Maud.

"But he does not know that Leonard is a gentleman," said Alice.

"And do you think that if Leonard were rich he would treat the poorest person in the world as Mr. Courtenay treats him?" said Maud, indignantly. "On the contrary, he would be even more courteous than he is now."

"I wish he was rich!" said Alice.

"I wonder what would become of his philosophy then?" said Maud.

"He would not need it," said Alice, simply.

"Shall we sing that duet again?" asked Maud.

"Do," said Alice, striking her tuning-fork.

As they had beautiful voices, and as Mr. Warrenne had strained a point to give them the best instruction, it was not wonderful that they sang to admiration.

Old Karl stopped his barrow under the garden wall, and, in the discordant voice common to deformed persons, murmured an accompaniment to the simple German air. Karl was privileged—Maud saw and heard him—gave him a nod, and went on with her part.

All at once Alice stopped, laid her hand on her sister's arm, and listened.

"Hush!—footsteps!" she said.

"So, this is where you hide yourselves!" said Mr. Courtenay, making his appearance

from amongst the shrubs. "I was told I should find you in the garden."

Maud drew up indignantly, bowed, because he took off his hat as he spoke, and looked inquiringly at him, as if to ask what brought him there.

"I heard all the first verse and part of the second," said Courtenay, coming close to them; "you sing remarkably well, upon my word."

"We ought to be flattered," said Maud. "Do you want papa? He is out."

"Thank you, no, I want *you*. This is your sister? How do you do, Miss Alice?"

Alice looked up with a shrinking expression of dislike on her countenance, bowed, and remained silent and listless.

"She does not like strangers?" he asked, looking at Maud.

"Some strangers," said Maud; "she goes by the voice."

"Well," he replied, with a smile, "in voices she has a right to be fastidious. But to my

business. Mrs. Creswick wishes you to drive out with her to-day; she will call for you at two o'clock."

"Oh, Maud!" said Alice, "it is to sketch the Roman arch; Mrs. Creswick said she would take you soon."

"I am much obliged to Mrs. Creswick," said Maud, rising as if to dissolve the interview; "I will take care to be ready."

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To gather some peas," returned Maud; "you may tell Miss Reynolds so, when you go back—she is greatly interested in my doings."

"Why don't you make your German gather them?"

"Because I like to do it myself," replied Maud.

"I will help you," said Courtenay.

"Oh, pray do!" returned Maud; "it will be something new to you to find yourself gathering peas."

"And you can tell your brother of *me*,"

said Mr. Courtenay; "then we shall be even."

Now, when Maud acceded to his proposition, she had not the least idea that he was in earnest. She was surprised and vexed when he coolly took up the basket from the arbour seat, and prepared to set to work.

"Are these the peas," said Mr. Courtenay; "what do you call them?"

"I call them Blue Prussians!" said Maud, growing very cross; "you don't hold the basket right—I can't reach it there."

"Oh! I beg your pardon; you must let me come between you and your sister; then you will both be able to get at it."

"And there," cried Maud, "see, you gather all the little pods that are of no use. Leave it alone! Any one could tell that you were born in London."

"But I was not born in London; on the contrary, I was raised in the West of England, quite in the the country; but I never gathered

peas before. You ought to teach me, instead of scolding and growing angry."

"I should be sorry to have to teach you any thing," returned Maud.

Alice, with one hand on the rim of the basket, gathered fast with the other. She said nothing, but smiled at Maud's vehemence.

"Look here, I have caught you in the fact," said Courtenay; "it is you who gather the little pods, not me. You cannot deny that you gathered that one."

"That one I did," said Maud; "but you gathered all the other little ones. When there are no more peas, I shall tell papa who gathered them wastefully."

"Dear me! Miss Alice, don't you pity me."

Alice laughed.

"There, I am sure, Miss Warrenne, you cannot mean to eat more peas than those."

"As if I eat them all!" cried Maud. "Besides, you do not in the least know how many there will be when they are shelled."

"That is true. I am sadly ignorant; but you should not be proud because you know more than I. Do you not play the organ, Miss Alice?"

"Only the seraphine," said Alice; "I have not an organ."

"Will you let me hear you play?"

Alice looked perplexed, but Maud said firmly, though she coloured as she spoke, "Papa is out, and therefore Alice and I cannot receive any visitors."

Mr. Courtenay seemed to see the propriety of this remark; for he said immediately, "I would not, on any account, intrude upon you; but, eh! no rule without an exception?"

For at that moment there came up the garden walk, with the air of being completely at home, a gentleman, who, though no longer young, was still handsome.

"Oh! it is Mr. Scudamore! Good morning!" cried Maud, and without farther cere-

mony, she and her sister ran forward to meet him.

Mr. Courtenay staid just long enough to see Mr. Scudamore stoop down and pry into Maud's basket, and then turn to go back to the house, with one of the girls hanging upon each arm.

"I must ascertain who this Scudamore is," said he to himself; "a fine looking man, upon my word."

"I thought you had been an immense time away," said Florence, as Mr. Courtenay entered the dining-room, where they were all at luncheon. "I suppose you have been spending the morning to very good purpose with my aunt's pattern, Miss Warrenne?"

"Is it so?" said Courtenay, turning with a delighted countenance to Mrs. Creswick; "do you think so highly of her? And you never told me!"

"Perhaps I left you the pleasure of finding it out," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Miss Warrenne will be happy to drive with you at two," said Courtenay.

"Then of course, Mr. Courtenay, you don't ride; we must try to do without you," said Florence, ironically.

"I ride, Miss Reynolds, but not your way, I am afraid."

"Some secret," said Florence, turning scornfully to Captain O'Neill; "I suppose you know his proceedings pretty well. Perhaps Miss Warrenne is not the only favourite in this neighbourhood."

"Florence, my dear!" said Mrs. Creswick, in a warning tone.

Captain O'Neill seemed quite overpowered by this witticism; he did not appear to know how to leave off laughing.

"I wonder who is to chaperon her through all the love-making!" exclaimed Florence, who seemed neither inclined to take Mrs. Creswick's warning hint, nor to let Maud alone.

"She seems to be one of the few young

adies who can do without a chaperon," said Courtenay, coolly.

"Oh! we all know her to be perfection," said Florence; "and perfect people are to me intolerable."

"There is another class of intolerable people, to my mind," said Courtenay; "those who never aim at perfection."

Captain O'Neill did not understand him; —but Florence did: she coloured with anger and jealousy.

For though she had not the remotest idea that Mr. Courtenay had any intention of recommending himself to Maud Warrenne, indeed, she felt far too much contempt for her to believe it possible, yet she could not endure that the smallest particle of praise should be bestowed in her presence upon any other woman.

"And who is this Mr. Scudamore?" asked Courtenay, after a pause.

"Oh! the pleasantest man!" cried Flo-

rence; "he was once in the army—and I do *so* like military men."

"Even when they are English," said Courtenay, drily.

"Yes—that is the only thing which makes them bearable;" said Florence.

"Mr. Scudamore is a very worthy neighbour of ours," said Mrs. Creswick; "an elderly man, and an intimate friend of Mr. Warrenne's."

"Oh! you need not fear his running away with Maud from you," said Florence.

"I am not timid, Miss Reynolds," returned Courtenay, quietly.

Florence, finding that she gained nothing by wrangling with him, rose pettishly, and went up stairs to put on her habit.

Mrs. Creswick called for Maud, and bade her bring her pencils to draw the archway. It was a ruin but little known, in a very unfrequented part of the country; standing among pasture fields and lanes, rough from disuse,

and thickly belted with old hedges. A crooked ash had taken root above the arch and hung fantastically over—while gnarled oaks and sycamores pressed rudely against the crumbling sides of the grey stone-work. They left the carriage and walked a little way down the lane to get a better view of the ruin. Just beneath the arch, with his arm over his horse's neck, stood Mr. Courtenay, waiting their arrival, with as much composure as if he had merely halted to rest his horse in his progress up the steep ascent.

"Put me in, if you like, Miss Warrenne," he said, as soon as they drew near enough to speak. "I charge nothing for sitting."

Maud did not deign to reply to him, but said pettishly to Mrs. Creswick,—"He blocks up the arch with his horse."

"Does he?" said Mrs. Creswick, smiling, "suppose then we ask him to move!"

This, Maud did not condescend to do. She

took one of the camp stools that the servant was placing, and opened her sketch book.

"I think, Mr. Courtenay, we must have you a little nearer this way!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"With the greatest pleasure," said he, coming forward. "Here Bob, hold my horse."

The man's name was Lewis, but that made no difference to Mr. Courtenay.

Maud, who remembered how perseveringly he had assigned the sobriquet of Mr. Cooke to Leonard, turned away her head that he might not see her laugh.

"Now then, have you any pencils to be cut?" said Courtenay, throwing himself on the bank by her side.

"No, thank you."

"Some colours then to be rubbed."

"Nothing—I can't bear to be waited on;" said Maud, looking steadily on the arch.

"How do you mean to shade it?"

"With sepia—when I get home."

"It would look better coloured."

"Very likely."

"You can't do it, I suppose?"

"Yes—Maud can draw very well in water colours," said Mrs. Creswick, finding that no answer came from Maud.

"Ah! then it is only idleness," said Courtenay.

"Is this your usual method of ingratiating yourself with ladies, Mr. Courtenay?" asked Mrs. Creswick, while Maud had stepped nearer to the arch to examine something a little more minutely.

"I never ingratiate myself—I never cared for a woman before—I never shall again—it's not my way," said Courtenay, briefly.

"You cannot hope to succeed without a little more deference—we expect it, Mr. Courtenay, before marriage," said Mrs. Creswick, with a smile.

"Yes—and what do you get after?" said Courtenay. "If she likes me, I will make her

happy—if she does not, what should I gain by persuading her for a time that she did?—I could get on well enough with a wife I cared nothing about; but if I married *her* and found she had made a mistake, I would blow my brains out!"

"My dear Mr. Courtenay, do not talk so!" said Mrs. Creswick, quite startled by the coolness with which he announced his intention.

"And what would you have me tell her?" pursued Mr. Courtenay, "that she is beautiful? she knows that already. That she is noble? it runs in her veins. That she is accomplished? she might say I am no judge—no—depend on it, my way is the fairest."

"Have you got it right?" asked Mrs. Creswick, as Maud came back to her seat.

"Oh yes! I thought it was some decoration—but it is only decay," returned Maud.

"A very pretty part of the country," said Courtenay to Mrs. Creswick.

"Yes; just here you get a little silver strip

of the river and farther on the mullioned windows of Forrel Court, peeping through the elms."

"You see it through the arch, like a picture set in a frame," said Courtenay. "Have you got it all in to your distance Miss Warrenne?"

"Of course," returned Maud.

"I shall like to see the end of this sketch, as I was present at the beginning," said Courtenay.

No answer from Maud

"We must try and get a peep of it!" said Mrs. Creswick.

"*You* shall, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud.

Courtenay smiled, and taking up her glove which lay on the ground beside her, amused himself by drawing out the slender fingers.

"Why, he has got my glove, Mrs. Creswick!" exclaimed Maud colouring with anger.

"Give it her," said Mrs. Creswick, feeling half amused and half unequal to the task of mediating between the two disputants.

Courtenay pressed the glove to his lips, and handed it to Maud. She flung it down, and set her foot upon it—absolutely crushed it into the ground in her anger.

"My dear, my dear," said Mrs. Creswick.

"Now I have done, Mrs. Creswick," said Maud shutting her book; "and I should have done before, if I had not been bored."

Then crossing before Mr. Courtenay, she got into the carriage, and sat at the farther side, looking over her sketch until they started.

"A very excellent young man," said Mrs. Creswick after a pause.

"That is a good thing," said Maud, "when people don't know how to be agreeable, it is a comfort to think they are excellent."

"Here he is, galloping after us," said Mrs. Creswick.

Maud looked another way.

"Just in time to hand you out," said Courtenay, coming up, as the carriage stopped to sat down Maud at her garden gate.

After this adventure, Maud resolutely declined all Mrs. Creswick's overtures—she would not drive with her—she would not go to drink tea at the Ferns. Courtenay was—not in despair, that was very foreign to his nature—but exceedingly chafed and put out of his way. He confided his annoyance to Mrs. Creswick, who sympathized with him, but declared her inability to do more. All she could promise was that she would get Maud somehow or other to attend the evening party she meant to give next week.

On Sunday, Mr. Courtenay set out for church before any one else, and loitered about the churchyard until the Warrennes appeared.

They came on each side of their father, quietly dressed in their plain straw bonnets and white gowns. As Maud passed Mr. Courtenay, who stood by the porch, she bowed hurriedly in his return for his salutation, which she did not see until she had almost passed him, and then went straight to her

pew. And that slight bow was all he got in return for loitering half an hour about the churchyard, and drawing on himself the sarcastic wonderment of Miss Reynolds for the rest of the day.

Maud never turned her eyes towards him during the service, and although he was able to contemplate, unobserved, her broad forehead and long downcast eyelashes, yet he would have rather preferred that she should seem just now and then a little conscious of his presence.

And when church was over he came out too soon, and missed her that way—and while he was handing Mrs. Creswick into her carriage, he had the satisfaction of seeing her pass him on the arm of Mr. Scudamore, who was addressing to her some jesting speech in which he could only distinctly catch the single word "Dick!"

CHAPTER X.

——————voi sete franco
E se'l mio errar giammai vi trasse ad ira,
Per pietade, e per Dio chieggo perdono,
Che sia quel ch'io mi voglia, vostro sono.
Boiardo.

Mr. Warrenne could not refuse Mrs. Creswick's kind and pressing request that he would bring both his daughters to the Ferns the night of her party. Maud rebelled a little; but, contrary to her expectation, Alice was easily persuaded. If her papa would promise to keep beside her all the time, she thought she could encounter it—and she should find some amusement in listening to the music (it was a quad-

rille party), and catching the conversation of the people around.

It happened that Mr. Scudamore was also invited; and the girls were delighted at an addition to their party which promised to render them still more independent of Miss Reynolds and her associates.

Mr. Scudamore brought them each a beautiful scarf of red cachemire, worked at the ends in large flowers with silver thread. As these scarfs were very narrow, Maud suggested that they should be worn as sashes; she saw that nothing could be more picturesque than the contrast with their white muslin dresses; and she did not know that anything not universally worn is sure to draw down the wrath of a certain class of persons. So they went—Alice and her father, Maud and Mr. Scudamore. Simple as were their dresses, the splendid scarfs round their waists, with the silver fringes nearly reaching their feet, made them appear effective—and they were beyond

compare the loveliest girls in the room. Maud with her figure tall, slight, and spirited as Diana, and her dark hair banded back and shining like a mirror—Alice, shorter, softer—her face and neck shaded by the wild profusion of her beautiful ringlets.

The company were assembled in the library in order to hear some professional singers, who were engaged to perform before the dancing commenced.

Courtenay joined the Warrennes just as the singing was about to commence — was named to Mr. Warrenne by Mrs. Creswick, and stood leaning on the back of Maud's chair.

"Have you forgiven me yet?" asked Courtenay.

"I have forgotten all about you," said Maud, turning away impatiently.

"That's better still—we are good friends then," he said.

Maud did not choose to confirm this statement.

"You are fond of music, of course?" said Courtenay.

"Yes, I like it," said Maud coldly.

"Here comes the Prima Donna," said Courtenay; "I don't know what her voice may turn out, but she is a very sensible person."

She was a German; and most probably, from her appearance, of Jewish extraction. Short, heavy, and dignified in her aspect, with large, handsome arms, and a brow like a thundercloud. She wore a wreath of scarlet flowers round her black hair, walked slowly and indolently to the piano, dropped her fan and handkerchief into a chair behind her, and sat down to accompany herself, making a slow and sleepy bow to the professional gentleman who had offered her his services. She sang with great power, great ease, and great expression; but with that peculiar German production of tone, which seems to the unlearned more to resemble crying than singing.

As soon as she rose from the piano, Mrs. Creswick came up and begged Maud and Alice to sing a duet—asked it so earnestly, as a favour to herself, that it was not easy to refuse.

Maud led Alice to the piano, and she struck off a prelude with the hand of a master.

Courtenay said something in a low tone to the German singer, and she lifted up her dark Jewish eyes with an expression of interest and surprise. He had told her that Alice was blind.

The sisters sang beautifully. Alice was not timid, because she could not see the people, and Maud felt brave because she sang with Alice. And not attempting anything beyond the reach of amateurs to execute, and gifted with voices of that pure and vibrating sweetness which may so often be found among the English, it might have been supposed that their singing would have been generally liked. But not at all—the guests were horribly bored,

and heartily glad when the duet, which was a very short one, was over.

The professional people, however, gathered near to listen, and nearer to praise; for it is very odd that musical people are more generous than others in bestowing commendation on those who excel.

"It is a talent that God so often gives to the blind," said the German singer with much feeling, as Alice returned to her seat, "you are very fortunate to possess it;—rich, it gives you pleasure—poor, it would have given you bread."

Alice stretched out her hand to the singer. "I am so glad to have pleased *you*;" she said.

"Mdlle Moor would prefer speaking German," said Courtenay; for the few last sentences had passed in French.

"It is the same to me," said Alice.

"You would have been flattered, if you could have seen Mdlle. Moor during your

song," said Courtenay to Alice, "I assure you she had tears in her eyes."

"And Mdlle. 'tears in her voice,'" said the German; "but you," she added, looking up to Mr. Courtenay, "were equally pleased."

"Quite enchanted;" returned Courtenay, drily.

Mdlle. Moor thought he spoke ironically—she looked puzzled. "Yet I thought you loved music," she said.

"Very much attached to it. I have a stall always at the Opera, and I listen to the ballet."

"How flattering to us!" said the singer, with a smile.

"After that, I cannot hope to induce you to give us another scena," said Courtenay.

"The dancing is going to begin," replied the German, "you who listen to the ballet, should now be thinking of finding a partner."

"Presently," said Courtenay. "I shall like

to hear your opinion of the lady who is about to favour the company."

Captain O'Neill was now seen ostentatiously leading forward Miss Reynolds in a white lace dress, with a beautiful garniture of China roses. She looked very lovely and diffident—turned round with a movement full of grace to Captain O'Neill as she took her seat, and gave him her large bouquet to hold with an air of sweet resignation that might have become Lady Jane Grey when she offered her prayerbook to the Lieutenant of the Tower. But her singing was not quite so good as that which preceded it. She got hold of a very fine air by Niedermeyer, with a great many flats and sharps, and she had an unlucky propensity to confuse those useful little steps in the musical ladder. Everybody was glad when she had finished. Captain O'Neill, because he could not flirt so well while she was singing—Courtenay because it bored him—Alice, because it gave her absolute pain—the German, because

under her solemn aspect she was shaking with suppressed laughter—and the rest of the people, because they wanted to begin dancing.

But all round the room there ran a murmur of "Beautiful! Exquisite! This *is* singing! We have not had such a treat all the evening!"

And one worthy lady turned to Maud, and congratulated her on the great advantage she might derive from listening to such a delightful performance.

Maud replied politely—and Courtenay after translating the lady's remark into German for the benefit of Mdlle. Moor, who burst into an indignant laugh, said to Maud,—

"You did quite right—I make a point of it myself—there is no possible absurdity in which I do not gladly acquiesce—it is too Quixotic an effort to attempt to explain to people."

"There was nothing to explain;" said Maud, smiling, "the lady thought Miss Rey-

nolds sang better than I did—I was the last person who should try to convince her that it was not the case."

"How very well you speak German," said Courtenay.

"Oh! when Leonard was with us, we spoke it constantly, he was so fond of it," replied Maud. Then stopping as the name of her brother brought before her all Mr. Courtenay's airs, she turned to Mr. Scudamore on the other side.

"I wish, Mr. Scudamore, I could give you a little bit of this sofa," said she, "but it is impossible."

"Eh! child—oh! I don't wish to sit down. Who are you going to dance with?"

"I hope with me," said Courtenay, advancing to her.

"No, thank you," said Maud, quietly; but firmly.

Courtenay bowed and drew back.

"Do you know what you have done, child?"

said Mr. Scudamore, "do you know that you cannot dance now with anybody else?—that you must actually sit still all the rest of the evening?"

"I shall not sit still, grandfather," said Maud, "I shall walk about with you, and look at the dancers. I don't choose to dance with that man."

"Ah! if Dick were but here," said Mr. Scudamore, as he offered Maud his arm.

The quadrille band now struck up, and the drawing-room was speedily thronged by the dancers and the lookers on.

Florence swept past Maud, on the arm of Captain O'Neill, with a look that seemed plainly to say, "Poor soul; nobody will ask you to dance."

"Could not you have said you were engaged, or you would wait a little, or anything that would have left you at liberty," pursued Mr. Scudamore; "people won't believe you had the opportunity."

"It seems to prey upon your mind, grandfather," said Maud, laughing. "I shall consult you next time, and get a fib ready."

The quadrille being over, people began to form a waltz.

A very young gentleman, with a pert dark Spanish face, was leading Mdlle. Moor to the dancers. He passed close to Mr. Courtenay, who was leaning against the wall, looking coolly on.

"I say, Courtenay, it is such a bore!" said the young gentleman.

"What is a bore?"

"Dancing with this woman, who can't understand what I say."

"My dear friend, depend upon it, she will not be a loser on that account," said Mr. Courtenay, quietly.

This kind of speeches was always well received by Mr. Courtenay's friends, under the idea that it was "his way;" that he never

meant anything, and that those people who thought him satirical were quite mistaken."

"I say, I wish you would take her off my hands," pursued the young gentleman.

"With all my heart."

And Courtenay, in a few words, explained to Mdlle. Moor, that the young gentleman was reduced to despair at being unable to converse with her, and that he hoped for the honour of dancing with her in his stead.

"The singer, well pleased, consented to the transfer, and the young gentleman trotted up to Maud.

"I'm so enraptured, said the youth," who always perverted the letter *R*, "I thought I should never have got wid of her. Why can't she speak English?"

"For the same reason that you cannot speak German, perhaps," said Maud, laughing.

"Will you do me the honour to waltz with me?" asked the young gentleman.

"No, that I cannot do, unfortunately," replied Maud.

"Cannot you waltz?"

"Not this evening."

"Pway don't wefuse me, for I've set my heart on dancing with you," said the young gentlemen.

"Not to night, indeed; for I have refused some one else," said Maud.

"Oh! if that is all," said the young gentleman, "I beg that you will begin diwectly, and if the fellow gwumbles, I'll call him out."

"No, no, young gentleman, that will never do!" said Mr. Scudamore, looking very much amused.

"Who was it?" asked the youth; "I should not wonder if it was that fellow O'Neill. I should like to pick a quawwel with him, for he is sometimes vewy diswespectful in his manners to me."

"It does not matter who it was," said

Maud, smiling; "it is all over with me for this evening."

The young gentleman remained shuffling about near Maud for a minute or two, and then exclaimed, as if a thought suddenly struck him,—

"Stop! wait a bit; I'll set it all to wights in a minute."

Then crossing to Mr. Courtenay, who had led Mdlle. Moor to a seat, and was standing talking to her, the young gentleman suddenly pulled him by the arm.

"Hollo! what do you want now?" exclaimed Mr. Courtenay.

"Oh! I say; I want to dance with that angel in the wed scawf."

"Well, dance away then, and don't bore me."

"But I wish you would attend to me," said the young gentleman, with another pull; "thewe is a difficulty!"

"A difficulty, is there?"

"Yes; she has wefused some fellow, and so she hesitates about accepting me."

"And you are such a reasonable person, that of course you see the propriety of giving up the matter."

"Never!" said the young gentleman. "I want you to come and pewsuade her, or else I shall do something despewate!"

"You look very formidable to night," said Mr. Courtenay, drily. I am quite at your orders."

"Come, then," said the young gentleman, "I know it is that wetch O'Neill; and I shall have the twiumph of cawwying her off before his eyes!"

It was so customary for Mr. Courtenay to be applied to by all his friends in their difficulties, and to bring them through by some means or other, that the young gentleman made sure of his partner on the spot.

Mr. Courtenay went up coolly to Maud,

and, turning towards his companion, said: "Allow me to present to you Mr. Osborne—Miss Warrenne."

Maud bowed, and wondered; but she was still more surprised when he added—

"Mr. Osborne is very ambitious of dancing with you, Miss Warrenne. May I hope that he will be more successful in his application than I have been."

Maud coloured deeply. There was something generous, she thought, in this frankness; and she was keenly sensitive to generosity of character; but then it showed that he was not reduced to despair by her refusal, and that was an unflattering view of the case.

"I do not wish to dance to-night," she replied; "and I thought I should have been understood when I pleaded a former refusal. I am quite sorry that Mr. Osborne should have taken the trouble to urge his request."

Mr. Osborne seemed still very much disposed to argue the point; but Mr. Courte-

the vacant seat next to Maud, said to him—

"I almost think you had better try your fortune in another quarter."

It seemed as if none of Mr. Courtenay's friends were in the habit of disputing his commands; for Mr. Osborne, after a little shuffling indecision of gesture, went to another part of the room.

"Now, I wonder," said Mr. Courtenay, looking steadily at Maud, "what was your objection to dancing with me?"

Mr. Scudamore had left her to speak to Mr. Warrenne, who was with Alice at the other side of the room. Maud, surrounded by strangers, felt as much alone as if she had been in a desert. She coloured, and made no reply.

"Because," he continued, "I can't well have offended you during our very short acquaintance; unless, indeed, you have not yet forgiven me for meddling with your glove."

Still Maud remained silent, wishing heartily

that she was out of reach of his searching eyes.

"But if I have, from any inadventure displeased you, he pursued, I beg you sincerely to forget it. I could imagine nothing that I would more earnestly avoid than giving you offence."

"You have not given me any," replied Maud, in a constrained voice.

"Here is Miss Warrenne determined against dancing," said Mr. Courtenay, as Mrs. Creswick came up to them.

"What! Maud sitting still!" said Mrs. Creswick. "Whose fault is that, my dear?"

"My own fault, Mrs. Creswick; I prefer looking on," said Maud.

"Do ladies ever tell the truth on these occasions?" asked Mr. Courtenay.

Mr. Scudamore joined them at this moment, to the great relief of Maud.

"My dear," he said, "your papa and Alice are going; they are both tired. If you like to stay, I will take care of you."

"You don't know what a charge you undertake, Mr. Scudamore," said Maud. "I will go at once, for fear of getting you into a scrape."

"Will you, really," said Mrs. Creswick.

"If you please, my dear Mrs. Creswick," returned Maud, "I am growing sleepy."

"That is because you won't dance," said Courtenay, following her into the hall.

Mr. Scudamore put on her shawl, and handed her down the steps.

"Oh, I am so glad it is over!" said Maud, as they stepped out into the moonlight and the fresh, dewy air; and the sounds of the waltz beat fainter and fainter as they left the house behind them. "The best part of a party must always be the walk home!'

CHAPTER XI.

Neither by my consent shalt thou train him up in wars—for he that sets up his rest to live by that profession, can hardly be an honest man or a good Christian. Besides, it is a science no longer in request than use;—for soldiers in peace, are like chimneys in summer.

Lord Burleigh.

Be wise Sir, she's a woman, and a trouble, and has her many faults, the least of which is she cannot love you.

The Scornful Lady.

The attentions of Captain O'Neill to Miss Reynolds at this party were so marked, that the guests all went home impressed with the belief that he was her accepted suitor. He had danced with her whenever he found her disengaged; the rest of the time he spent in

wandering about the room, or taking up the seats which ought to have been reserved for the ladies; for he was one of those men who cannot pay attention to one woman without rudely neglecting all the others who are present. Mrs. Creswick watched their growing intimacy with much inquietude; and on the morning after the dance, she thought that it was proper to come to an explanation with her niece on the subject.

Florence received her Aunt's summons with much dissatisfaction, lingered over her toilet to the last possible moment, and then made her appearance, with an encouraging air of weariness and indifference; sank down into an easy chair opposite to her Aunt, and prepared herself to listen.

Mrs. Creswick, seated perfectly upright, turned over the book before her, for some moments in silence, and then fixing her breathless looks upon her niece, she said,—

"Now, my dear, will you tell me exactly

how you are situated with regard to Captain O'Neill?"

"Do you know, my dear Aunt, that you have chosen a very difficult question to put to me?" said Florence languidly smiling.

"Take plenty of time my dear," said Mrs. Creswick; "all I ask, is a very clear and accurate reply."

"How I wish that I had Miss Warrenne to assist me!" exclaimed Florence; "she could define, I dare say, every shade of a gentleman's attentions; but for me my dear Aunt, I am afraid I must reply—I don't know."

"You can tell me perhaps, whether you have yet received a proposal from Captain O'Neill?" said Mrs. Creswick, steadily.

"Even that, my dear aunt, is sometimes no easy question, there are so many ways of insinuating a proposal; as Maud Warrenne will tell you."

"Suppose we leave Maud Warrenne quite

alone for the present, and come back to the point," said Mrs. Creswick, calmly.

At this crisis, Florence was seized with a fit of laughter that she seemed unable to control. "You must excuse me, my dear aunt," she cried; "but those scarfs! Did you ever see anything so preposterous as the figures those poor girls had made of themselves?"

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Creswick, patiently, "as soon as we can get rid of the scarfs, we will go back to the old story. Has Captain O'Neill yet made you an offer?"

"Why—no—not exactly;" said Florence, hesitating.

"Then I am thankful to think that it is not yet too late for you to retire with credit from this affair," said Mrs. Creswick, "for you must be aware that he is a person whom your father would highly disapprove."

Florence coloured high with anger, and said with a disdainful smile—"Is it a fair question

to ask, in what manner Captain O'Neill has had the misfortune to displease you?"

"I have reason to believe," said Mrs. Creswick, "that he is a man totally devoid of religious, and even of moral principle—that he has always led a very irregular life—and that he is so deficient in education and intelligence, that there is but slight ground to hope for his reformation;—for Dr. Arnold, (and he is a very high authority), tells us that 'if you take away a man's knowledge, you do not bring him to the state of an infant, but to that of a brute—and of one of the most mischievous and malignant of the brute creation..... He then who is a fool as far as regards earthly things, is much more a fool with regard to heavenly things. He who cannot raise himself even to the lower height, how can he attain to the higher?'"

Mrs. Creswick having read the above sentences from the book which lay before her, closed the volume and looked steadily at her niece.

"I am sure he is a very honourable man!"

exclaimed Florence, indignantly, "he goes everywhere—he is in the best society! I believe he is no worse than other people, only he is no hypocrite!"

"It pains me," said Mrs. Creswick, "to hear you quote the opinion of *society* in support of any man's character or conduct. How many persons move through society caressed and honoured, who are at enmity with God, and basely negligent of all that elevates and purifies our nature!"

"I never had the least ambition to marry a methodist, my dear aunt," said Florence, quietly.

"I think it right," said Mrs. Creswick, after a pause, "to tell you a circumstance that fell under the knowledge of one of my intimate friends not very long ago, although I should hope that at your age you are a perfect stranger to the very name of such transactions. (Poor Mrs. Creswick! She had never

been behind the scenes of a boarding school!)"

"Not long ago," she continued, "he persuaded a married woman, the wife of a tradesman, to quit her husband and children for his protection."

"Drawn in, I dare say," replied Florence, with perfect indifference, "those women are so designing!"

"In this instance," said Mrs. Creswick, sternly, "the wretched young woman was much respected until she attracted the notice of Captain O'Neill. He ruined the peace of a family hitherto remarkable for its quiet comfort,—he deprived three unhappy infants of a mother's care—and he destroyed the life as well as the virtue of his victim, who died two months ago, of grief and shame—of what is usually called a broken heart."

Mrs. Creswick had spoken with much feeling, and she paused—hoping to have aroused

some displeasure, perhaps some sorrow in her niece's mind. But Florence, after arranging her bracelet with much care, looked languidly towards her aunt.

"Poor man," she said, "what a bore for him—I dare say it is unknown the scenes he had to go through! He will be wiser next time, and not attempt to undermine such very rigid virtue. It really does not answer on the whole."

Mrs. Creswick was a little disappointed, for she made it a rule to think the very best she could of people, and she had hoped to find something like womanly feeling still lurking in her niece's heart. A thought just crossed her mind for a moment as to whether a creature so devoid of sensibility, so callous to right and wrong, was worth any farther effort to save; but it was one of her maxims that the fulfilment of our duty should be always entirely independant of persons or circumstances.

She glanced at her watch, and then turning with a calm face to her niece, she said—

"I will detain you but a short time, but I must beg your earnest attention to what I am about to say. I had hoped that such a tale as the one I have just touched upon, would have decided you against the most splendid match that the world could offer. But if your taste leads you to prefer what is depraved, you must be saved from your own inclinations. You cannot marry Captain O'Neill; your father would not allow it; and, therefore, it is deeply important that you give him no reason to believe that his suit will be successful."

"I am too candid, my dear aunt," said Florence, rising gracefully; "if I like a person, I cannot help shewing it; and should Captain O'Neill continue to please me, I must try and persuade papa to settle something very handsome upon us!"

And with these words she glided gently out of the room.

Mrs. Creswick rose also, took her bonnet from its box, and her mantle from its drawer (she was very fond of waiting on herself), and put them carefully on; then stepping to the open window before she left the room, she saw Florence crossing the lawn with Captain O'Neill—he seemed to be begging, and she coquettishly withholding a bit of geranium which she held in her hand. Such was the result of the morning's interview with her niece.

The sisters in their turn had much to discuss the morning after the ball.

"I am so sorry you did not dance, Maud," said Alice. "Mr. Scudamore told papa he had never seen you look so handsome.

"The grandfather is partial," replied Maud; "but I should like the idea, indeed, of dancing with that horrid man. I can hardly speak civilly to him when I think of Leonard."

"I think Miss Reynolds ought to marry

that scornful Mr. Courtenay," said Alice, smiling.

"They would be very well matched," returned Maud.

"Does he waltz well?" asked Alice.

"Pretty well; not nearly so well as Leonard."

"Is he handsome?"

"Not at all! Don't let us talk of him; it puts me out of patience!" exclaimed Maud.

"Look out, and tell me what the grandfather is doing with papa," said Alice.

"They are walking up and down the front, and the grandfather has a letter in his hand."

"Anything about Alberic?" exclaimed Alice, turning pale.

"Grandfather," cried Maud, leaning from the window, "Alice wishes to know the contents of that letter she hears you have in your hand."

"Maud!" said Alice, trying to draw her sister back.

"Oh!" you are up, are you, after all your fatigues," said Mr. Scudamore, coming to the window, and sitting down on the ledge. "This letter is about Dick, Mistress Maud. He has been wounded at the taking of that Fort they were expecting to be ordered against when he last wrote."

"Oh, grandfather! how sorry I am for you," exclaimed Alice.

"All in the day's work," said Mr. Scudamore, coolly; "but he has a mind to try what a sea voyage will do for him. It seems he has been hit in the knee, and the doctors there advise him to lose the limb. He thinks they will manage better for him over here; and so, Maud, my dear, he is coming home."

"Oh! dear, how dreadful!" said Alice shuddering.

"Oh, I have no doubt the voyage will set him up again—it always does," said Mr. Scudamore.

"But," said Alice, "we have not heard from Alberic; how is that?"

"My letter came by Marseilles," said Mr. Scudamore; "but I can tell you that Alberic is very well, though he was with the lines at this siege, and in a perfect shower of shot and shell; where you know, Queen Maud, he had no business to be!"

"I know—I am glad of it!" cried Maud, with great animation; "it is what I should like myself. What a beautiful sight a siege must be. And a man is more a man who has once looked death in the face!"

"Listen to Queen Maud!" said Mr. Scudamore, laughing; "I hope you will bear that in mind when you see Dick."

"How needless!" exclaimed Alice, "how unkind to us, to put himself in such danger—Oh, Maud! don't praise him for it when you write."

"What the child says is very true," re-

marked Mr. Scudamore; "he was out of his place; it is not his *métier;* if he had been knocked on the head he would have got no thanks; but you and I, Maud, think it is very natural for all that."

"Here comes the white horse," said Alice.

"On my word, I am sometimes tempted to think with Mistress Thorns that the child is not blind," said Mr. Scudamore.

Mr. Warrenne, at the sight of the white horse, now folded the letter carefully, and returned it to Mr. Scudamore.

"I see no reason, my dear friend," he said, "why he should not recover this injury; but I could not pronounce an opinion with any confidence without seeing the patient."

Then mounting the white horse, he inclined his head to Karl, who held the bridle, with that tranquil courtesy which always distinguished his manner, and rode slowly through the gate.

"A good horse and trusty," said Maud,

"though not quite an Orelia; perhaps, grandfather, you did not happen to know that Orelia was the courser of Don Roderick?"

"Not I, 'faith!" said Mr. Scudamore, "I say, Queen Maud, look here!"

As he spoke he placed under her eye a passage in the letter which he had folded back.

"Mrs. Creswick and Mr. Courtenay," said Dinah, opening the drawing-room door.

"Ah! how do you do?" said Mr. Courtenay, as he entered, "I am come to see if you have any more peas to be gathered."

Maud started, and looked up all crimson from the letter—made no reply to Mr. Courtenay's considerate proposal, but went up straight to Mrs. Creswick.

"Mr. Scudamore kindly bringing you news from India?" said Mrs. Creswick, seeing the sheet of thin paper in that gentleman's hand.

"Yes, Madam," said Mr. Scudamore, taking off his hat; "and now I leave them in such good hands, I will wish you all good morning.

And, Queen Maud," he added, lowering his voice to a whisper, and tapping the letter which he held, "don't you listen to that fellow yonder. Remember, Dick will be here before Christmas!"

"Nonsense!" said Maud, turning abruptly from the window.

"And what made you knock up so soon last night, Miss Alice," asked Courtenay of the younger sister.

"I was very tired," said Alice; "I am not used to sit up so late."

"Late! It was not one o'clock."

"That is late for me," said Alice, smiling.

"And late for papa," said Maud, who has to do his work the next day, whether he sits up or not."

"Were you singing?" asked Mrs. Creswick, seeing the seraphine open.

"Yes;" we were trying a bit from a Mass of Pergolesi," said Alice. "It is such a sweet movement."

"Will you let me hear it?" asked Mrs. Creswick.

It was a duet, and Maud looked cross; but Alice, who was so familiar with music as not to mind it no more than netting or plaiting straw before strangers, rose at once, saying—

"I am sure we shall be happy, if you will excuse a little hoarseness on my part, for when I am tired my voice always goes."

Courtenay hastened to hand her to the instrument; but she smiled gently, and said, "I find my own way best. I am going to look for the book."

"And of what use is the book to you?" asked Courtenay, as she placed it on the stand.

"It is for Maud," said Alice; "she is apt to forget the words."

"And how do you learn to play a new piece?"

"Maud reads it over to me as you would read a page of poetry until you knew it."

"You would not know what to do without your sister!"

"Without her!" exclaimed Alice, with a gesture of terror. "Oh, no!"

"But when she marries?"

"Oh! Maud will never marry," said Alice, seating herself contentedly at the seraphine; "she is not rich enough."

"Do you play the piano also?" asked Courtenay.

"Yes, I learned on the piano; but the seraphine is so nice for sacred music that papa saved up and bought me one," said Alice with her usual simplicity.

"And who is this Dick that I hear talked of," asked Courtenay.

"Dick? Oh! only a joke of Mr. Scudamore's; we have never even seen him," said Alice, beginning to play the symphony.

Maud came up to her, and they sang the duet.

"Very sweet, indeed," said Mrs. Creswick; "but I am going to be very exacting—I am

going to ask Maud for the Roman Girl's Song."

"It does not go well with the seraphine, and the piano is in the dining-room," said Maud; "and I had rather sing it another day."

"Will you sing this Agnus Dei?" asked Courtenay, taking up a piece of music from the seraphine.

"That belongs to Alice, said Maud quietly;" and going to the table she took up her work, and seated herself beside Mrs. Creswick.

"And I must say good morning," said Mrs. Creswick, rising.

"Oh, Mrs. Creswick!" said Alice, "do look at this rare orchis before you go. Mr. Scudamore brought it yesterday for papa."

Mrs. Creswick stepped to the window-seat and examined the flower. Maud remained by the table working in silence.

"You sing divinely," said Courtenay coming up to her.

"All young ladies do," returned Maud, coldly.

"I tell you plainly what I think," said Courtenay, with much earnestness, "I wish to heaven you thought of me in any one respect as I do of you."

Maud coloured, and bent her head over her work.

"I see you shun me," he continued. "Deal frankly with me! Have I no power to alter your sentiments towards me? Is it in vain?"

His voice faltered — Maud withdrew her hands, which he had taken in the eagerness of his appeal, and hurried out of the room.

"It won't do," he said, coming abruptly up to Mrs. Creswick; "I go back to Town to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XII.

Mich.—That he is desperate sick I do believe well,
And that without a speedy cure it kills him.
Ser.—Will't please you draw near? the weak gentleman
Grows worse and worse still.
Phy.—He shall do well, my friend.
Excellent well, I warrant thee.
There's no doubt of him; none at all; ne'er fear him.
Monsieur Thomas.

Leonard had now been six months at the office. His employers spoke well of him; his fellow clerks respected and liked him. He could not be intimate with them, for he was made altogether of different materials. He never confided to them what he thought or felt, but he was cheerful and frank in his manners;

jocose with Mr. Mills, who loved to be jested with; and civil to those with whom he had less to do.

Whether it had dawned slowly into Mr. Courtenay's head that he was of rather a better grade than the others, or not, he became gradually more scrupulous in his behaviour to him. This change first made itself known by his discovering that Leonard's name was not Cooke. He was not quite sure that he was the person referred to, when Courtenay first called him Mr. Warrenne. And this was the occasion on which it happened. He was taking a copy of a German letter which Mr. Courtenay had written to a correspondent at Hamburgh, when that gentleman coming down from one of the upstairs rooms, paused and looked to see what he was doing.

"I have made that feminine," said he, pointing with the head of his stick to an adjective in his letter; you may as well make it masculine in the copy, Mr. Warrenne."

"I have done so," said Leonard, glancing at his copy; for he was so good a German scholar that he had written the word right by instinct. Then, after a pause, he added, shyly, "Would you like to alter the original?"

The term struck Mr. Courtenay, who, among many other peculiarities, was fastidious to excess. He thought a low person would have said *correct*, instead of *alter*. "Oh! no thank you," he replied; and added, as he was walking away, "you know German better than I do."

Leonard naturally thought that the sky was likely to fall, after this wonderful concession; but the next day he heard that Mr. Courtenay was gone into the country for a few weeks, and Maud's letters soon gave him the information that he was staying at the Ferns. She merely mentioned that she had seen him there, but entered into no particulars respecting his visit.

He happened to be alone in the office when Mr. Courtenay did return. It need not be said

that he disliked him pretty cordially, and the more so as Mr. Thomason, the head partner, was particularly courteous, and even friendly, to him in his manners.

What was his surprise when Mr. Courtenay on walking into the room took off his hat, set it on the table, and then, coming up to Leonard's desk, leaned his back against it, and said, in an easy tone—

"How do you do, Mr. Warrenne?"

Leonard, with a slight bow, returned the salutation, concluded that Mr. Courtenay had taken something stronger than coffee that morning, and then dipped his pen.

"I had the pleasure of seeing a part of your family at Erlesmede," said Mr. Courtenay. "They were perfectly well, I am glad to tell you."

Leonard looked up at his companion, who seemed to have settled himself for a gossip—thanked him for his information, and went on writing.

"Hard at it!" said Mr. Courtenay, watching his progress.

Leonard smiled.

"You know the Creswicks, I believe?" said Courtenay.

"Yes; I have known them since my return from abroad," said Leonard.

"Mrs. Creswick is a very old friend of mine," said Courtenay. "I find she has a niece staying with her at present.

Leonard tried to write very steadily.

"Miss Reynolds tells me that you waltz admirably," said Courtenay.

"Miss Reynolds was making herself merry at my expense," replied Leonard, with composure.

"She spoke with great fervour, I assure you. Are you fond of dancing?"

"It is out of my way now," said Leonard, calmly; "I liked it very well abroad."

"But I am interrupting you," said Mr. Courtenay, moving a little way.

"My time is not my own," said Leonard, courteously, for he was never abrupt, even to those persons whom he disliked.

Mr. Courtenay took the hint, and left him; but whenever he passed through the office, he always asked him how he did, and made some trifling remark; and Leonard puzzled over this singular change of behaviour without coming to any satisfactory conclusion.

One day it chanced that Leonard, who had caught a bad cold, was coughing repeatedly as he was at his work. Mr. Courtenay, who was standing giving some directions to Mr. Mills, turned round and said—

"What an infernal cough you have got!"

Leonard thinking that this was an ebullition of spleen, because the sound of his cough disturbed Mr. Courtenay's conversation, said nothing, but tried to control it.

Mr. Mills said in a surly tone, "Mr. Warrenne got wet through the other day, Sir."

"How did that come about?" asked Mr. Courtenay, addressing Leonard.

"I happened to be caught in the rain," replied Leonard.

"And you never will carry an umbrella," said Mr. Mills, who had become so fond of Leonard as to take an interest in all his proceedings.

"But I do not like an umbrella, Mr. Mills," replied Leonard.

"Young people ought not to go by what they like," returned Mr. Mills.

Leonard laughed, and Mr. Courtenay finding that Mr. Mills had presumed to mingle in the dialogue, began to sing, and walked away.

In the course of the afternoon, as Leonard was putting up a packet of papers, Mr. Courtenay came in. The rain was pouring down as it sometimes does pour in November.

"Where are you going, eh?" asked Courtenay.

"To Somerset House, with these letters," said Leonard.

"What! in this rain?" asked Courtenay.

"Certainly," replied Leonard, with a smile.

"I will leave them, as I drive past," said Courtenay, quickly.

Leonard's astonishment was unbounded; but he replied that he was much obliged to Mr. Courtenay, but he could not accept his kindness.

To this remark Mr. Courtenay made answer by holding out his hand for the papers.

"You are very good," said Leonard; "but this is a part of my business. I am answerable if these letters are mislaid or forgotten. You will excuse me if I seem ungracious, but I must take them myself;" and reaching his hat, he passed Mr. Courtenay with a bow, and went out into the street.

But a long walk in the rain did not improve

his cough. The next day he was almost too ill to go down to the office, and his cough was unremitting.

Mr. Mills, on the other side of the green curtain, gave him a good many receipts for bad colds, and lectures on the use of umbrellas.

"You will have to lay by," said Mr. Mills. "I am sure Mr. Thomason will give you leave. I will ask him if you like?"

"Thank you Mr. Mills," said Leonard; "do not let us be in a hurry. I shall be able to go on for some time yet; for I have an idea that when I do give in, it will be for good."

Mr. Mills swore violently at this announcement, for it affected his feelings.

Leonard coughed and wrote without interruption.

"I will tell you what," said Mr. Mills; "if you don't take such a cold as that in time it will end in the churchyard!"

"But it is a very easy death, Mr. Mills," said Leonard, reaching down a ledger.

"What is an easy death?" asked Mr. Mills, gruffly.

"Consumption," returned Leonard.

"Do you mean to say that it is in your family?"

"I do, indeed; but your agreeable conversation distracts me, and I have a profound calculation to make here."

Mr. Mills got up and left the office.

"I hope I have not offended the old fellow," said Leonard, half aloud, as he continued his writing; "but it is impossible to work, and talk at the same time."

"Is that your opinion?" asked Mr. Courtenay, who was standing behind him.

Leonard started a little, and then said, calmly, "I thought I was alone."

"Why I have been here for the last five minutes;" said Mr. Courtenay.

Leonard made no answer.

"I have been admiring your politeness to that curious old monster," said Courtenay. "Why don't you cut him short?"

"I am in the same station," said Leonard, still more coolly, "any rudeness on my part would be worse than wrong—it would be ridiculous."

Mr. Courtenay remained leaning against the desk, turning about his stick. At last he looked up and said—

"You had better let me drive you home at once."

"Thank you," said Leonard, smiling; "if I were to take myself off now, I should stand a good chance of being dismissed in the morning."

"Ah! what's the term they have for being dismissed?" said Courtenay, as if thinking.

"I never heard it," said Leonard, "I know very little of my companions."

"And yet you talk of being in their station," said Courtenay, "it is too good."

Mr. Mills came back at this moment, looking very important, with the news that he had spoken to Mr. Thomason, and that Mr. Warrenne was not to return to the office until he was entirely recovered of his cough.

Leonard looked half vexed and half gratified. It was very good-natured of Mr. Mills to take so much interest in his welfare, but there was nothing he hated so much as any fuss made about his ailments.

"And now perhaps you will let me drive home," said Courtenay, "unless you have a predilection for a natural shower-bath. Not the least trouble. It is all in my way."

Notwithstanding this consideration on the part of Mr. Courtenay, Leonard's cough was worse the next day. Like all men he was very nervous and impatient of illness, and the solitude of his lodging did not improve his spirits —he was in the last stage of depression, when to his unbounded amazement the door of his room opened, and Mr. Courtenay walked in.

He had not got over his wonder at that gentleman's condescension in driving him home, and what miracle brought him to his lodgings, he was still farther from comprehending. Indeed he was likely to assign any cause but the true one to this singular change; he little dreamed that Maud had wrought the alteration.

Mr. Courtenay was the last person to persevere, or to cherish an attachment that was not returned. He would have made any sacrifice, any exertion to secure her regard. He had never forgotten his first brief interview with her—for some lurking bit of sentiment is not uncommonly found in those characters which disclaim it altogether; yet as soon as he felt convinced that he could not succeed in winning her, he dismissed her image from his mind by an effort of which his character, trained and hardened by circumstances, was capable. But towards her brother he shewed the same interest that he would have done had his suit to the sister proved successful.

"So, you are worse," said Courtenay, taking a chair, "what have you done to get better? Have you sent for a doctor?"

"No," replied Leonard, "I shall write to my father if I do not get better soon."

"You are quite right to put it off as long as you possibly can," said Courtenay, drily, "because then either way, his advice will be perfectly useless."

Leonard not knowing whether he spoke in jest or earnest, was silent.

"Well, I have brought you some books," said his visitor, "German ones—I suppose you like German literature. People generally think there is something very grand in their rambling nonsense. Here is a little book called 'Moonshine,' it will just suit you."

Leonard smiled and thanked him

"Schiller?" said Courtenay, looking into a volume that lay on the table, "ah!—when you are older you will read Shakspere. But these second-rate minds are a bad preparation. You

would do well to put Schiller into the fire."

Leonard endeavoured to obtain a milder verdict for the great German. He urged his power and facility in the ballad—the versatile character of his genius—the stately beauty of Wallenstein—the fire and pathos of Don Karlos.

"All very fine," said Courtenay, "but there are things to be had which are finer. Do you think he ever wrote so grand a ballad as Chevy Chase? Do you call Wallenstein as good a tragedy as Ford's Perkin Warbeck? And as for Don Karlos, the finest tragedy in the world would be ruined by the admission of such a blunderer as Von Posa."

"Von Posa!" echoed Leonard, who had always been in the habit of considering his character as the gem of the piece.

"You admire him do you?" said Courtenay, taking up the book. "Yes, he engages our interest from the very first. He sets out

in life with an act of cowardice of which every Eton schoolboy would be ashamed—throws a shuttlecock into an old woman's eye, and then allows the Prince to bear the penalty of his fault."

"But he regrets that episode in his history," said Leonard, pointing to the lines—

"O stille Prinz von diesen kindischen
Geschichten, die mich jetzt noch schamroth machen."

"Much good that did," said Courtenay, "I hate a knave; but I think I hate him more if he is sorry for it. And then the quantity of vague philanthropic nonsense he talks to the King, proves him to be an idiot of the first water!"

"Nay," said Leonard, "I cannot but think his appeal to Philip, in behalf of the Netherlands, full of eloquence and moral courage, and dictated by the purest feelings of humanity."

"Well, I allow him to be a well-meaning creature in some respects," returned Courtenay, "but destitute of the faintest gleam of com-

mon sense. Where was the use of raving about liberty of conscience to the greatest bigot that ever sat on the throne of Spain? And then, after floundering from one absurd plot to another, to be shot like a dog, because he could not help it! A fit end for a man who had not skill enough to play his own game!"

"But his aim throughout was to defend the Prince at his own expense," said Leonard.

"And, like a clumsy fellow, lost himself, and did his friend no good," returned Courtenay. But it is a fine poem after all. The character of Elizabeth is exquisite, and that of Karlos so highly coloured, that one speaks no treason in naming him along with Hamlet. That is a grand scene after the death of Posa: there is one passage in which he bursts upon the King with such a torrent of invective—stay—it begins—"

As Mr. Courtenay turned the leaves of the book to find the speech, there fell from it a

card, on which the following names were written with a pencil.

O'Neill,

De Merville,

Taylor,

Le Grange,

Roxby.

Courtenay, thinking that it was a list of the dramatis personæ, glanced over it.

"Eh!" said he, handing it to Leonard.

He had never been so confounded in his life. He remembered having put down the names of the five conspirators as he termed them, the day on which he heard them spoken of by the military cousin.

It was the most awkward thing in the world. He could not explain the circumstance; and to have written those names down at random looked, to say the least of it, a little like insanity. After gazing on the card with an air of great vexation, he threw it angrily into the fire.

Mr. Courtenay remained contemplating him in silence for a minute with a quiet smile, and then said,—

"You became very intimate, of course, with Miss Reynolds, when you were at Erlesmede?"

"I saw her occasionally," said Leonard; "my sister is very well acquainted with her aunt. I could not help meeting her sometimes."

"Ah! that was unpleasant!" said Courtenay in a tone of sympathy.

"Not at all," replied Leonard, trying to appear quite unconcerned; "they were very pleasant people at the Ferns.

"I am glad you seem to have no particular views in that quarter," said Courtenay ironically. "You had better leave her to O'Neill, or any one of them—they will be perfectly well matched, depend upon it."

"As for views," said Leonard, "it is impossible that I could entertain any with

regard to a person so much above me in point of fortune and position; but I have a great respect for her, and for Mrs. Creswick, and I confess that it would be the happiest day of of my life in which I could put a bullet through any one of those villains who engaged in such a detestable act of treachery!"

Mr. Courtenay looked vastly amused by the vehemence with which his companion proclaimed his wishes. "Mrs. Creswick, I am sure, would feel the compliment very keenly," he said, with a provoking smile. "By the way, I think it was with Miss Reynolds with whom you used to waltz?"

"Certainly not with Mrs. Creswick," said Leonard, smiling at the very idea of waltzing with that lady. And I have not danced with Miss Reynolds more than two or three times, and then quite by accident, when there were a few people to dinner, and they got up a waltz in the evening."

"I left Mr. Mills mourning your absence,

and informing everybody that he didn't know what he should do without you," said Courtenay, as he rose to go.

"I shall not leave him to mourn long," said Leonard. "I hope to be at my work in a day or two."

"Why, you don't like it I am sure," said Courtenay.

"I like still less that other people should do my business," returned Leonard.

"You need not be ceremonious, you know, with such a fellow as old Mills," said Mr. Courtenay.

"Nor he with me," said Leonard; "we are fellow-servants."

"Now, that's all pride, putting yourself on a level with him," said Mr. Courtenay.

"I spoke only of my station, which is palpable enough; I said nothing of *myself*," returned Leonard.

He looked so like Maud as he spoke.

"Bravo!" said Mr. Courtenay, shaking

hands with him, "take care of yourself till I see you again. It's plain you want somebody to look after you."

For several days Mr. Courtenay visited Leonard regularly. He brought him books and magazines, and remained for some time conversing with him, as if desirous to lighten the tedium of his illness. He never again alluded to the unfortunate card, much to the relief of Leonard, who could ill bear his calm, ironical manner on the subject.

Once, having found him arranging some flowers in a glass, Mr. Courtenay brought him a large cluster of white violets, which, he said, came from Mr. Thomason's, where they grew them, and asked him carelessly if Miss Reynolds was fond of flowers. Leonard did not know; and Courtenay said that possibly, like the French lady, she was not much addicted to harmless pleasures.

In their literary discussions, Courtenay seemed to take a pleasure in mystifying him,

and advancing the strangest opinions, just to hear what he would say; and Leonard observed that he always took the most matter-of-fact view possible of every subject, and that he laughed unmercifully at the colouring of romance, with which Leonard was apt to invest any topic that pleased his fancy. He even, as they grew more intimate, frequently applied to him the name of the German book that he had lent him—"Moonshine."

But finding in a few days that he grew rather worse than better, Courtenay insisted on his going down to Erlesmede, to put himself under his father's care, and backed his advice by a message from Mr. Thomason, to the effect that he was at liberty to absent himself from the office for a few weeks in order to re-establish his health.

To Leonard this permission was like a respite from death. He had a fanciful presentiment that he should not recover in London, and that the air of Erlesmede would work

his immediate cure. He wrote home instantly to apprise his family of his coming, and followed his letter down without delay.

CHAPTER XIII.

Iforza.——————The pulse
Beats on sometimes when the heart runs quite down.
Bianca Visconti

Sir I.—My son Ben! Bless thee my dear boy! Body o' me, thou art heartily welcome!
Love for Love.

"Leonard, my dear boy," said Mr. Warrenne, a few days after his son's arrival, "I shall not ride to-day; the white horse is at your service if you have a mind to go out, and it will be better for you than walking.

Leonard accepted with much pleasure.

The horse was ordered out, and he set off

on a ramble across the country. It was a sort of day that Leonard particularly liked at that season of the year;—dull, dark, and rather misty, with now and then a storm of wind. The night had been very boisterous, and as he rode down the lane, a number of broken branches strewed about gave earnest of the violence of the storm. The air was not at all cold; and the wind coming from the south-west, had nothing chilling in its breath: and Leonard rode on and on, very like a philosopher, without caring where he went, or how far he should have to go back again. About five miles from Erlesmede there was a wide desolate common, on the other side of which stood a broad belt of tall spreading trees, through which the road passed. This was always a bleak solitary part of the country, and many a tale of footpads and highway robbers was connected with the common and thicket: indeed, one particular angle of the road was called by the country people Dead Man's Corner, in commemoration of a

horrid murder, which it is needless to detail, committed on a poor man, who was buried by his assassin on the spot, and not discovered until many years after. In crossing this common, the wind rose rapidly, and with such fury, that Leonard seemed in some danger of being blown off his horse. He had half a mind to turn back, but seeing in front of him a low carriage, in which was a lady, driven by a man, he thought that if she could brave the weather, it could hardly be bad enough to check his progress. The carriage was just entering into the thicket, and might have been about a hundred yards in advance of him, when suddenly the wind swept as if in a circle: a large tree was uptorn by the roots, and fell steadily forward upon the travellers. A sharp cry seemed to mingle with the roar of the wind, and the crash of the enormous branches of the tree. Leonard reined up for a moment, completely paralysed, so sudden and yet so quiet was the work of destruction,—then dashed forward to see if

any assistance could yet avail the sufferers. The trunk had fallen so as to crush down one side of the low pony carriage, with the man who had been driving; the horse killed and forced down on one knee, in a strange position, with his head turned back; but the lady, by some capricious growth of the branches on that side of the tree, was providentially saved from death, or even, it seemed, from any serious injury.

But she was almost insensible from terror, and she neither replied to Leonard's anxious enquiries, nor seemed to hear what he said to her. She was leaning back in the carriage with her eyes wide open and directed forward; but it was evident that "their sense was shut." He felt in a complete dilemma. In the first place an intricate screen of boughs intervened between him and the unfortunate lady; in the next place, he did not know what to make of her condition. She was not exactly in a swoon, nor yet in her senses; and then

again it was possible that the unhappy man, crushed so horribly at her side, might be her husband: if so, how dreadful would be her return to consciousness.

Most gladly did he welcome the approach of a couple of woodmen, who, with axe in hand, were returning from their work. Under his direction, they cleared the branches around the lady, sufficiently to admit of his withdrawing her from the carriage, and leading her to some distance among the trees.

After supporting her onwards for a few moments, she shuddered violently, and said indistinctly several times, "Oh, horrible!" Then, attempting to turn back, she exclaimed—

"But where is Harper? I am sure he must be terribly hurt."

"I entreat you, Madam," said Leonard holding her back. "I cannot suffer you to see him—nothing you can do will avail him—his sufferings are over."

She covered her eyes with her hand for a moment, and then suddenly looking up, exclaimed as she pressed forward,—

"We are not yet sure that nothing can be done—he may be only stunned;—he is a very old servant," she added. "I shall be distressed, indeed, to lose him!"

Leonard again interposed—he knew well enough that life must be extinct—he assured her that the spectacle was appalling to himself, and quite unfit for her to witness.

The lady seemed greatly agitated, and after a short silence she said, in a voice so low that he could hardly catch the words,—

"And to whom am I indebted for so much kindness."

"My name is Warrenne, Madam," said Leonard; "and I beg you to believe that anything I can do farther to assist you will give me much satisfaction."

"Warrenne;" said the lady turning her eyes for the first time upon him; "singular!"

There was a pause, during which Leonard surveyed, in his turn, the lady whom he was escorting. Every trace of youth, and of the beauty which is dependant on youth, had long left her countenance; but there remained a delightful regularity of feature, a sweetness in the dark eyes, a serenity on the brow, a repose that was intellectual, not physical, in the expression, which with some persons would make amends for the graces of which time had robbed her.

"I think I must trespass on you, so far as to beg that you will conduct me home. I believe my house is the nearest place to this, said the lady feebly; "we must send for workmen to remove this poor man. Thank God he has no wife or family; but how to reach my house."

"It is but an unpleasant mode of conveyance,"—said Leonard; "but my horse is very quiet, and if I lead him, you need not be under the least apprehension."

The lady consented immediately to this plan, and Leonard having brought up his horse lifted her on it, and half supporting her on the saddle walked by her side. They went on in silence, except from time to time when they came to a turning, he asked her which road he was to follow. At last after about three miles, which appeared to Leonard almost interminable, they came to a long line of plantations, after which the lady directed him to open a massive gate in a stone archway which led them through a thick deep wood by a winding path, to the carved porch of a gothic building. The man-servant who opened the hall door looked greatly astonished to see his lady return in such a manner, and said respectfully, as she entered leaning on Leonard's arm, that he feared there had been some accident.

"An awful one," she replied and passed in.

As soon as she reached the drawing-room she sank into a low chair, and after making some ineffectual attempts to speak, fainted away.

It was not absolutely necessary for a woman to be young and pretty to excite Leonard's sympathy and interest, but this was a case in which he could do nothing beyond ringing the bell and consigning her to the care of her maid; and then feeling that he had been absent an unconscionable time, and that those at home would be anxious for his return, and not thinking it at all necessary to remain to receive the lady's thanks for his services, he went out into the hall and asked for his horse. The quiet grey haired servant who answered his application, detained him a few moments to ask an account of the adventure which Leonard gave, to his infinite horror and surprise, and he learned in his turn, that the name of the lady he had assisted was Mrs. Digby, and the poor man who was killed was her steward. He had driven his lady to some almshouses on the other side of her estate and was returning when the fatal accident occurred.

"It was then, Mrs. Digby whom I met so strangely," said Leonard on hearing her name.

"Mrs. Digby of Forrel Court," said the quiet servant, with a slight increase of importance in his manner.

Leonard looked up at the old scutcheon in front of the ancient porch, with the idea that he either knew or ought to know something of the person bearing that name, but the chevron gules and the eagle's heads in chief, did not appear to enlighten him, and returning the courteous salutation of the old man he rode slowly off.

"He had not overrated the anxiety which his sisters would be feeling at his absence. When he returned, they were waiting in the most painful uncertainty; and Mr. Scudamore, who had dropped in to drink tea, as he did about every other night, was promising Maud that he would set out to look for him in another ten minutes. Even Mr. Warrenne was

walking up and down the room; a sure sign with him of being thoroughly uncomfortable.

His narrative was eagerly listened to by the whole party. Maud thought it an adventure; Mr. Scudamore proclaimed it a coincidence; Mr. Warrenne said nothing, but sighed deeply once or twice; and Alice, drawing nearer to him, whispered—

"The grandfather told us, papa, that Mrs. Digby was in love with you, a great many years ago."

"He made a little mistake, my dear," said Mr. Warrenne, quietly; and Alice asked no more questions.

While they were at tea, Dinah entered with a note for Mr. Warrenne; a few lines from Mrs. Digby begging him to visit her immediately, and stating that her carriage should fetch him and bring him back.

"How very odd," said Maud, when her father was gone; "Mrs. Digby has never had papa before."

"Then you may depend on it she was never ill," said Mr. Scudamore.

"Not ill for thirty years! what a fortunate person," said Maud. "But I shall regret Leonard's share in the adventure if it increases his cough."

"I am quite well," said Leonard; "I began to mend directly I got out of London. Courtenay said that I should."

"It seems so strange to hear you speak familiarly of that horrid person," said Maud, smiling.

"If it had not been for him, I should not have come down at all," said Leonard. "I told you his manner was quite altered."

"I cannot understand it," said Alice.

Maud turned away her head.

"Hollo! somebody else wanting your father," said Mr. Scudamore, as the gate bell rang violently.

"Papa will be quite *répandu* if this goes

on," said Maud rising: "come, Alice, let us give the grandfather a duet."

She had not finished speaking, when the door flew open, and Mrs. Thorns, all splashed and out of breath, hurried into the room.

"Oh! you are a pretty father!" said she, going straight up to her astonished brother, "a very pretty father, on my word; to be out drinking tea when your son is come home—in a post-chaise-and-four, straight from Hastings—the ship went to pieces not five hours ago—the hurricane, you know—tore up three trees in the Cowslip meadow—and a mercy he was saved at all, seeing he was so lame—and how are you getting on Master Leonard?

"What! Dick come home?" said Mr. Scudamore, starting up, and laughing to conceal his emotion; "and shipwrecked too—ha! ha!—then, Queen Maud, I am off. I shall bring him here as soon as possible, you may depend, just to hear your opinion of him."

Mr. Scudamore was outside the door in an

instant; but Mrs. Thorns lingered a moment behind, to say—

"He's very handsome, if he was not so yellow; but, as I said to Louisa, beauty has nothing at all to do with it—not that I ever thought Thompson so ugly as they all did—he would have been drowned if a gentleman had not helped him into a boat—three trees in the Cowslip meadow—but he is in a hurry—good night!

CHAPTER XIV.

Vil.—What does the world say of me?

Sca.—The world behaves itself as it uses to do on such occasions.

Love for Love.

It will easily be believed that the village had enough to talk about for some time to come. The wonderful escape of Mrs. Digby went through a great variety of editions; but everybody seemed to agree that Leonard Warrenne had some share in the adventure. This was remarkably near the truth, for a village narrative. Of course a good many people stoutly maintained that it was Leonard

who had been crushed by the tree, and benevolently carried by Mrs. Digby to her house, where he was now lying, slowly recovering from his accident, under her careful nursing. For it is a very common practice in rural districts to retain a slight outline of the particulars in any little affair of this kind, and to reverse the parts which the people concerned in it have played. Leonard's appearance at church on the following Sunday, tended rather to contradict the prevailing opinions, particularly as he bore no traces of having been a victim.

It was rather a pity that Captain Scudamore, who had for the last few days divided with Leonard the curiosity and the gossip of the village, was unable to show himself at church on the same day. A man who had just been shipwrecked, and saved from drowning by the exertions of Sir Frederic Manning, a gentleman whose eccentricities were the talk of the county, would have been equally ex-

posed to the scrutiny of the congregation. But the injury he had received in his knee had been so aggravated by the hurry and exertion of escaping from the wreck, that he was for the present a close prisoner to his room, and threatened by Mr. Warrenne with the tic dolouroux if he infringed his directions. Leonard, therefore, had the attention of the parish all to himself. One would think they had never seen a young man of twenty before! He could not turn his head or raise his eyes without finding fifty enquiring looks fastened upon his face. Miss Reynolds alone seemed not to share in the general curiosity. Mrs. Creswick gave him a nod and a kindly smile; and the little Colonel paused to whisper to him, over the pew door, that he was "quite a hero." But Florence, after a quick, sudden glance, and a slight increase of colour as she passed him, swept on in her black velvet bonnet and crimson cachemire, determined to look haughty and indifferent.

The service proceeded: and Mr. Ranger in that calm and sonorous voice that charmed even his *un-friends* to attention, gave out, after the names of one or two sick persons who begged for the prayers of the congregation, that "Richard Scudamore desired to return thanks to Almighty God for his late escape from shipwreck."

Alice felt the colour rise to her cheeks, and the tears to her eyes; she could hardly explain to herself why she was thus affected; but she could not get those few words out of her head during the whole service.

"I was so pleased," she said, reverting, with a little hesitation to the circumstance as she was walking home with her sister; "I felt glad, Maud, for your sake."

"For *my* sake!" exclaimed Maud; "dear Alice! pray be glad for the young man. It is a good thing to find that he has a little decency; but pray don't jumble him and me together in your head! Leonard, do make

haste; there is Mrs. Creswick loitering at the gate on purpose to speak to you."

"I won't keep you back, then," said Leonard; "but I am going, with Mr. Scudamore, to the Woodlands to be introduced to his son."

"O! then run, dear," said Maud; "such a treasure as Dick ought not to be kept waiting for his dinner or his luncheon, or whatever he has at this time of day. My love to the grandfather; and tell Mrs. Thorns that if her patience wears thin, she had better hand Dick over to Jack Robins, and come and stay with me till he gets well again."

Mrs. Creswick *was* lingering by the churchyard gate to see Leonard. She had always liked him very much; and she had been rather surprised to find that he had been at home some days without calling upon her. It crossed her mind at first that there might be some coolness between Leonard and her niece; for she was well aware that Florence exercised her power

and her caprice upon all who approached her; and she had sometimes thought with anxiety that his countenance betrayed more interest than was quite within the limits of acquaintanceship; but upon mentioning carelessly one morning to Florence that she had half expected young Warrenne to have paid them a visit, it did not quite appear that Florence remembered who he was—and when she was made to understand that her aunt was speaking of Mr. Warrenne's son, her manner expressed such total indifference as to whether he came or stayed away, that Mrs. Creswick hoped and concluded she was mistaken in her inference. She did not know how often Florence had loitered about the garden and paced the laurel walk in the hope that Leonard might be coming to see her; how often she had thought over their last scene with bitter vexation at the part she had played—how she had wondered at herself when all was over—how she had resolved that her future manner should be all kindness, all con-

sideration, when they met;—not that she could ever marry a young man with his prospects,—but that she reluctantly confessed to herself,—she loved him. It seemed as if the ideal and romantic picture of friendship which Leonard had wished to establish between them, had been transferred into her mind—she fancied that it would be delightful to promote his interests, to be his confidant, to receive his homage, and to reign over his heart, without surrendering her own. But when day after day passed without his calling, she felt that her power had passed away;—she tried to become careless, and assumed an indifference that was hardly natural towards an intimate acquaintance, in order to conceal from all eyes the keenness of her mortification.

"I was just waiting to speak to my old friend Leonard," said Mrs. Creswick, as Maud came up; "has he been ill or busy that we have never seen him?"

"He has been ill, my dear Mrs. Creswick,"

said Maud, "and the first day he ventured out he met with an adventure that brought back his cough—to-day is only his second appearance."

"And how has he vanished now?" said Mrs. Creswick, "I saw him come out of church with you."

"Mr. Scudamore carried him off to see his son;" replied Maud.

"Perhaps you can give us the true version of this affair of your brother's," said Florence, turning coldly to Maud, "had he anything to do with saving Captain Scudamore?"

"Nothing at all," replied Maud, with equal coldness.

"Oh! no—it was Sir Frederic Manning!" exclaimed Alice.

Mrs. Creswick smiled—Florence coloured angrily.

"Oh!—Sir Frederic is the hero, instead of your brother;" said Florence.

"Just so," said Maud.

"You never go to balls, I think," said Florence, as they walked on.

"Never," said Maud.

"Perhaps you do not dance?" said Florence.

"I have learned," replied Maud, quietly.

"Sir Frederic's name put me in mind of the R— ball," said Florence; "he came in a shooting jacket; never danced—and behaved so very oddly!"

"I am almost afraid that young man drinks;" said Mrs. Creswick.

"My dear aunt," said Florence, laughing, "you are 'almost afraid' of a fact that the whole county has recognised ever since I can remember."

"I did not know," Alice began, but she did not venture to conclude her protest against the formidable Miss Reynolds.

"Alice is going to tell us something that we shall all be glad to hear, in favour of Sir Frederic;" remarked Mrs. Creswick.

"I can tell you plenty in his favour, my dear Mrs. Creswick," said Maud, who felt the tremulous pressure of her sister's hand on her arm, and who cared nothing for the half-shut eyes of Miss Reynolds. "Papa often says, that he nowhere sees such active kindness as that of Sir Frederic to his tenants. When he hears of any case of distress or illness, he never rests until he has done all in his power to alleviate it. And his conduct at the wreck was really very daring, for the sea was so rough that nobody would venture to save the passengers, until he led the way."

"I think nothing of these adventures," said Florence; "every gentleman is supposed to be brave. Besides, that proves nothing against his drinking."

As she spoke, a horseman, riding at the most reckless speed, passed them; leaped a gate at a little distance down the road, and continued his way at the same rate across the fields.

"There goes your hero," observed Florence, turning scornfully towards Maud. "I hope you have something to say for his morality, in scouring the country after that fashion, instead of going to church? and pray add courtesy to his catalogue of virtues, in dashing past ladies and splashing them with mud as he passes. I pity your velvet cloak, my dear aunt."

"A mere trifle," said Mrs. Creswick, shaking from her mantle a few drops which had been flung up by the horse's hoofs. And now that we have done with Sir Frederic, let me hear all about Leonard, my dear Maud."

While Maud was giving Mrs. Creswick an account of her brother, Florence, wrapping her boa closer round her throat, walked briskly forward, as if she felt the cold; and then lingering at the iron gate of the Ferns, waited for her aunt to come up to her.

"And the rest I think I will hear from himself," were the concluding words of Mrs.

Creswick, as see joined her niece; "bring him with you, my dear, to-morrow."

"I wish I could," said Maud to Alice, as they went it at their own garden gate; "but you know, that nothing will induce him to come with me to the Ferns."

"I quite agree with him," said Alice, quietly; "Miss Reynolds is a great deal too much to encounter."

Leonard returned from the Woodlands very much pleased with his visit. Captain Scudamore had been so friendly, and had appeared so much obliged by his sitting with him for a couple of hours, that he felt much gratified.

"For it really is something unusual," he remarked to Maud, "for a gentleman to take any notice whatever of a person in my station."

Any allusion to the inferiority of his position, always nettled Maud, and it was partly on this account that he started the subject.

"Your station!" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes; "is there any possible occupation

that could wash the old blood out of your veins? If you were to sweep the streets, could that prevent you from being descended from the favourite of Charlemagne?"

"Do you know Maud, my dear," returned Leonard, "that in the old times, any member of the noblesse who meddled with commerce, forfeited, thenceforward, all the advantages of his birth? That is the way they managed things in France. And very right, too—for nothing is more opposed to the enlightened and graceful spirit of chivalry than the habits and principles of every kind of traffic."

"You are so prejudiced on that subject," said Maud.

"Yes; they were wise in those old times," said Leonard, warming as he went on. "The vassal, the agricultural labourer, who followed his lord to the field, might stand a chance of attracting the attention of his monarch by his services, and of passing, by the consecration of knighthood, into the noble class; but no cir-

cumstance, no amount of wealth, could ever enable a trader to emerge from the condition in which he was born. His privileges were secured to his order; but no successful speculation, no greedy profusion of gold could ever obtain for him an admission into the charmed circle of the aristocracy. Honour was in those days rendered to the sword and the lyre; but never to the sensual abundance, which, if it be but excessive enough, will now entitle a man to aspire to the highest society in the country."

"Well; now I could say a great deal for the merchant princes of Genoa and Venice," said Maud; "but as dinner is on the table, Master Leonard, I will rather try how I can cut up this fowl."

Maud asked no particular questions respecting Leonard's visit to the Woodlands during dinner. Mr. Warrenne disliked every species of gossip, and never indulged in details himself. He always wondered what it could signify to her, if Maud asked what such a

person wore, or who such a person was going to marry. Now Maud, like a "very woman," was fond of these trifling particulars; but then, like a "very woman," she was wiser than to bore her father about them.

But, after dinner, when Mr. Warrenne was dozing in his easy chair, and Maud and her sister had drawn close to the fire, while Leonard, lounging on the sofa, was peeling walnuts for Alice, her catechism began.

"Let me see—the grandfather dines between the services, on Sunday, does he not?" said Maud.

"He does. I took luncheon at the same time," replied Leonard.

"Does Mrs. Thorns trot about the room during dinner?" asked Maud; she always does at luncheon; but I have never happened to dine there."

"No; but she talks all the time to Jack Robins, who stands behind her chair, about the crops and the poultry, and the neighbours.

She says she cannot endure being waited on by regular servants. She calls them coxcombs. Mr. Scudamore's man never ventures to hand her a dish."

"How she would rejoice in Karl," said Alice laughing. "I am sure nobody could accuse him of being a regular servant."

"Yes; she says we are very fortunate in Karl; but, I'll tell you—there is one thing she would miss dreadfully—Karl could never bring her all the scandal of the village, as Jack Robins does."

"True; that would be a great loss," said Maud; "but, now let us approach our great subject. Alice is longing to hear a full, true, and particular account of Dick!"

"Oh, Maud!" interposed Alice.

"I am sure Alice has no curiosity about him," said Leonard; but I knew you would never rest long without making enquiries. Oh! he is a very nice fellow. I like his manners—he stops up in his room, at present."

"There is a man's description!—go on," said Maud.

"Oh! I don't know—he is very handsome, I think—he is rather like Mr. Scudamore—and he has such a small hand—I thought of you, and your aversion to large-handed people."

"A small hand! that is a decided virtue," said Maud.

"Papa has small hands," said Alice.

"But Miss Reynolds has not," said Maud.

"But such a splendid hand!" exclaimed Leonard; "so white, and beautifully formed!"

"Splendid! on the same principle that nurses persist in calling every broad, stout baby a *fine* child!"

"Oh, Maud! jealous!" exclaimed Leonard.

"Yes; I have cause," retorted Maud, glancing down on her own slender fingers.

"Ah! that reminds me that he has never called on Mrs. Creswick," said Alice.

"True; he must go to-morrow," said Maud.

"Indeed I cannot; I am engaged to dine at the Woodlands," replied Leonard.

"They dine late on week days," said Maud.

"Ay; but I go early," returned Leonard.

"I told you so," said Alice, significantly.

"What did your wisdom tell her?" said Leonard, presenting Alice with the walnut he had peeled.

"That you were afraid of Miss Reynolds," replied Alice.

"Oh! that's absurd. I will go any day that I have time," said Leonard, hastily.

"But we have not done with Dick, yet," said Maud. "What did you talk about?"

"We talked about Alberic. He gave me a description of Alberic's camel—he keeps a riding-camel—and we talked about the field-sports of India. He made me long to go there."

"Long! I should think so!" exclaimed Alice. "What would I give to find myself there, but for a day?"

"Fancy—'*A Day* in the East!'" said Leonard, laughing.

"Well; and what else did you talk about?" asked Maud.

"I hardly know. He asked me lots of questions, and he seemed in very good spirits; he jested with Mrs. Thorns about everything, and stuck a long peacock's feather in her old bonnet, and then begged she would go and show herself to Jack Robins."

"Was she angry?" asked Alice.

"No; she was highly delighted,"

"Is not it odd she never goes to church?" asked Maud.

"There; you cannot keep to your subject, though you are so curious," said Leonard; "now I will not answer you a single question more about Dick."

"Oh! one question, Leonard," said Alice, earnestly. "I have been longing to ask you just one thing."

"I said nothing about *you*," replied Leo-

nard; "perhaps I may answer *your* question."

"Did not Captain Scudamore ask you a great deal about Maud?"

"No, as it happened, he did not," said Leonard; "he was very inquisitive about my youngest sister; he seemed to have heard a great deal about your playing, Alice."

Alice's soft face was suffused with blushes. Maud looked a little surprised, but not at all vexed.

"And now," said she, "let us hear what the grandfather gave you for dinner?"

"My dear Maud," said Mr. Warrenne, waking up and joining in the conversation "what can that possibly matter to any of us?"

CHAPTER XV.

Asp.——————And be sure
You credit anything the light gives light to
Before a man. Rather believe the sea
Weeps for the ruin'd merchant when he roars—
Rather the wind courts but the pregnant sails
When the strong cordage cracks.

Beaumont and Fletcher.

Mr. Warrenne's time was now pretty much taken up between Mrs. Digby and Captain Scudamore. Mrs. Digby's health was terribly shaken by the fright she had experienced, but in a few days she persuaded Mr. Warrenne that she was sufficiently recovered to see Leonard, with whom she expressed herself very anxious to become acquainted.

Leonard could give his sisters but little account of his first visit to Mrs. Digby. He staid only a short time—was quite confused by her expressions of gratitude, brief and graceful though they were—admired her black velvet dress, and the beautiful hands, whose pearly whiteness was still untouched by the destroying finger of time; and was quite enchanted by the sweetness of her manners. She pressed him to come the next day that he might go over her conservatories; and the day after, that he might take home a particular flower for his father, which was to have blown by that time, but did not, and involved two or three more visits.

He soon became so intimate with Mrs. Digby, that he found himself talking to her with the openness of an old acquaintance; and she appeared to interest herself in his plans and ideas, and to draw from him his favourite pursuits and studies.

"You must come and see my garden in the

summer," she said one day, observing the glances of admiration he cast from the window upon the smooth lawns and broad terraces: "it is not quite devoid of beauty at this season, but Palmer and I are very proud of it about June."

"I should be delighted," said Leonard; "but I return to London in a fortnight, and during the summer I must be contented with a less attractive prospect."

"I have an idea that you do not find the gaieties of London compensate for the pleasures of the country," remarked Mrs. Digby.

"Why, Madam," said Leonard, frankly, "I have neither time nor means to share in its gaieties; and to be plain with you, my situation does not allow me access to the kind of society which alone would content me. I see nothing of London, but its worst streets, and a bit of the Thames if I have a mind to look out of the office window."

"And you do not like your employment I am afraid," said Mrs. Digby.

"No farther than as it enables me to be independent," said Leonard; "but that is a great comfort. I could not endure at my age to be a burden to my father."

"Perhaps you would rather have followed your father's profession," said Mrs. Digby.

"By no means, Madam," replied Leonard. "I don't think there is in the world a more ill-paid servant to the public than a medical man; ill-paid, not only in money, but also in gratitude and consideration."

"It has always appeared to me," said Mrs. Digby, "that there are some occupations which in themselves tend to advance and elevate the character. The profession of a clergyman, for instance, speaks for itself—it is a devotion of all a man's energies to the highest good of his fellow creatures: it is the closest imitation of the life of Christ that is known to us on earth. And a medical man, who habitually gives his skill and his labour to the poor, as so many do, without the slightest chance of remuneration,

often without even the recompense of thanks, is fulfilling one of the divinest laws of our religion. In fact, wherever self is forgotten, Mr. Leonard, the pursuit is ennobled; and those who make gain, which is the tribute money to self, the first object of their lives, depart the farthest from the Divine example."

"I believe," said Leonard, "that a medical man enjoys as much of that satisfaction which arises from disinterested labour as any one; but I can speak confidently of the great variety of annoyances to which he is exposed. As to the impertinence and ingratitude of poor people, it can never be a cause of serious vexation to a gentleman. It is all you can expect of them. But the caprice of a higher class of patients is more important, because its consequences are more injurious. The reasons for which an honest and experienced medical man is often dismissed from a family, would appear perfectly impossible to you, unless you were behind the scenes."

"I have never taken that view of the case," said Mrs. Digby; "for I should not dream of changing a medical adviser, unless something very serious could be urged, either against his talents or his character."

"People would hesitate about withdrawing from a tradesman who served them well with bread or candles," said Leonard. "They would hardly consider themselves justified in injuring his credit by such a mark of disapproval. But the slightest whim justifies people in casting off a medical adviser; where the injury is inconceivably greater to his circumstances. For anything of popularity hangs by a thread; and, unfortunately, his subsistence is dependant upon popular opinion. I often think that my father, if he had but been a smooth knave, (for roguery in these days must either be very smooth or very rough), would have amassed a large fortune by this time."

"Instead of which he has laid up for himself the grateful prayers of the poor, and the

love and respect of the rich," said Mrs. Digby.

"No, no, madam, these are the rewards of the story-books," said Leonard, laughing; "there are very few people, rich or poor, who either think or speak well of an honest man. He is an animal entirely above their comprehension. But my father has two or three staunch friends, who think that (like the king) he can do no wrong, and 'faith that is as much as any one can expect on this side the grave."

"You take rather a sad view of life for so young a man," said Mrs. Digby; "I wonder what it arises from. If our acquaintance were less recent I should be tempted to ask, quite generally, whether some little impediment to the course of true love is not the most likely way 'to puddle a clear spirit?'"

She smiled, without looking up, as she went on filling her netting needle.

Leonard, relieved at not meeting her eye, coloured deeply, but disclaimed the inference

—he was not so happy, he said, as to have even an unfortunate attachment.

"But do you know, I am rather sorry to hear that," said Mrs. Digby, "I owe you much obligation—and to your father still more—and I pleased myself with the idea that your happiness might be impeded by obstacles of a nature that I could remove."

"Indeed, Madam," said Leonard, "your kindness to me is such that I owe you a more candid reply than the one I gave you, I *was* so deeply attached to a young lady in this neighbourhood, that I should have thought any sacrifice or suffering on my part cheaply encountered if it contributed in the least degree to her happiness; but I found that she did not comprehend me at all, and I gave up the idea, so flattering to one's vanity, of being understood."

"And shall I intrude too much upon your confidence if I ask you the name of this young lady?" said Mrs. Digby.

"It was Miss Reynolds," replied Leonard.

"I could have guessed it, from the character she bears in the neighbourhood," said Mrs. Digby, drawing together her slender brows. "You have had a very fortunate escape. Had you been richer, you might not have found out till too late the heart she has now exposed to you. I hope," she continued, with an earnestness that rather surprised Leonard, "that if your fortunes should hereafter change, you will never be so mad as to seek her again!"

"My fortune or rather my want of it," said Leonard smiling, "is so definate that I shall not have the temptation, and it is generally understood that Miss Reynolds is now engaged to an officer, who is at present with his regiment."

"I rejoice to hear it," replied Mrs. Digby, "for you must be very unlike the generality of young men, Mr. Leonard, if you could resist the overtures of a practised coquette."

"I confess it madam," said Leonard, laugh-

ing; "but she would as soon make overtures to her footman, as to a man in my position. In resigning all thoughts of her, therefore, I do not put my philosophy to any severe trial."

"Well," said Mrs. Digby, after a pause, "you have given me your confidence, Mr. Leonard, and I am disposed in return, to give you mine."

Leonard looked up with an expression of interest.

"If I did not consider you a very singular young man," said she with a smile, "I should not imagine that the history of a woman fifty years of age, even though your own father played a conspicuous part in it, would interest you for a single moment; I count on your attention as a matter of course."

Leonard eagerly expressed a hope that she would continue; and very tranquilly, and working while she spoke, she went on with her narrative.

"You may have heard—at least it was all

over the country before your time," pursued Mrs. Digby, "that my father left me his property under a condition so peculiar, that I was strongly urged to endeavour to set it aside. This, I could under no circumstances have been induced to do. The idea of enjoying property except on the exact terms of the testator, would have been in my eyes a kind of sacrilege. This estate was bequeathed to me, provided I remained unmarried. If I married, it was to go to some distant connexion, for relations I had none. I now comprehend his motives for this singular proviso: I was left with somewhere about eight thousand a-year, Mr. Leonard. My father had no great idea of the happiness of the married state—no trust in the disinterested conduct of men in general. He believed, and I agree with him, that if I loved any man well enough to resign my fortune in his favour, that love would in itself be a compensation and a reward;—and that the man who would take me penniless, would be

more likely to render me happy, than one who might be tempted by my wealth to offer me his hand. I feel that in this arrangement he provided for my peace of mind, with a judgment far beyond what I myself possessed. For I was of a disposition that more than commonly demanded an exclusive and profound devotion, such as is not very usually accorded by your sex."

Leonard here made a movement as if he wished to justify all mankind—but he probably thought better of it, and again composed himself to listen.

"When the contents of this will were made known to me," pursued Mrs. Digby, "they occasioned me not one moment's anxiety or regret. I was blindly attached, and I believed engaged to a gentleman a few years older than myself, when I say I believed myself engaged, I mean that afterwards, upon recalling to mind every word that had passed between us, I found reason to acquit him of

being actually bound to me. However, I took for granted, as the whole neighbourhood did,—that we were solemnly engaged. I did not regret that I could not offer him, as I had once hoped to do, the fortune I meant to resign. I felt so much satisfaction in the idea of abandoning it for him, that I fancied he would feel equal pleasure in the sacrifice. I looked upon it as an earnest, which few people are so happy as to be enabled to offer before marriage, of the sincerity and depth of our love. I should have thought it the wildest injustice had I suspected that he would hesitate for a moment in his implied engagement to me. I knew his prospects would secure present comfort and future wealth whenever he should marry; and I tranquilly awaited his arrival as soon as he could with propriety present himself after my affliction. In the meantime he set sail for India, without a word to me of explanation or farewell. I assure you Mr. Leonard, that though I can now speak of it so calmly, it cost

me then, more agony than I care to look back upon."

"But this was not my father!" exclaimed Leonard, shocked at the idea of such baseness, and for the moment overlooking the fact that Mr. Warrenne had never been to India.

"No; this was not the part that your father played in my earlier history," said Mrs. Digby, with a smile; "names, in a narrative of this kind, are but of secondary importance; yet when in your own confessions you touched slightly upon the manner in which Miss Reynolds had trifled with your feelings and misinterpreted your heart, I felt that it was not given to the daughter, any more than to the father, to comprehend the sacredness and the wealth of a true and deep affection."

Leonard looked all astonishment—although there was no reason why Mr. Reynolds should not have been the person referred to—and Miss Reynolds a worthy imitator of her father.

"It is natural, I suppose, for young people

to form their opinion of the world at large from the little section that falls immediately under their eye," continued Mrs. Digby. "To me this incident embittered my feelings, and perverted my judgment. If he whom I had invested with every perfection, whom I had enthroned above the angels, and worshipped as no mortal should be adored; if he could, for the loss of a little coin, perjure his inmost soul and break his unspoken vows, what must be the ordinary conduct of common men? What baseness, what pitiful treachery must direct their daily thoughts and acts? I shut myself up from every human being in silent disgust. I could hardly endure the needful presence of my servants. I transacted business by letter with the lawyer, who was on a visit at my house; and could only feel satisfaction at my wealth, inasmuch as it enabled me to carry out my plan of seclusion."

As Mrs. Digby spoke, for the first time during her history, with some warmth and

animation, the kindling of her cheek and eye gave her back for the moment the bright and spiritual beauty of her youth.

"I had been acquainted with Mr. Warrenne during the lifetime of my father," continued Mrs. Digby; "and though my mind was too much pre-occupied to speculate on the object of his frequent visits, I had sometimes imagined that I was not indifferent to him. It was, I think, about six months after my father's death that I received a letter from him, in which he declared to me his long and devoted attachment, and offered to me with much respect and hesitation his hand. He had been withheld from making such a declaration for a length of time, under the idea that I was engaged. The departure of Mr. Reynolds had undeceived him in this respect. It did not occur to him that I could be forsaken; and he had eagerly awaited the close of the earliest interval that could elapse after my father's death, to lay before me his sentiments, and

solicit their return. He knew that if I married I shonld be penniless; and with a proud humility that pleased me, he touched on his ancient birth, his want of social position, his limited income, and the wealth he urged me to resign. He thought that to most women the affections of home were worth any sacrifice, and he knew that in my case I must purchase them by the surrender of my estate. In fact, he judged my heart as I had once hoped another would have judged and valued it. I am a bigot in behalf of the Old Blood, Mr. Leonard. I believe good sort of people may be found in every grade of life. I am not guilty of the impiety of supposing that Heaven is solely peopled with the descendants of the Normans and the Vikinger; but there is a high strain of feeling which alone belongs to such lordly descent.

"Every word of your father's letter breathed this strain."

Leonard coloured high with pleasure and

emotion at this tribute to his father. Mrs. Digby went on :—

"It may have occurred to you to meet with some trait of character, or perhaps only some written sentiment, which so wonderfully applied to the mood of your mind as to exercise a permanent and beneficent influence over your disposition. Such influence your father's letter had upon my feelings. I was at once lifted out of the weak despair which had followed my disappointment. The darkness around me seemed dispelled. There was yet faith, and love, and true nobility upon the earth. People may talk of the benefactors of their race; but those are the real benefactors who minister health and stability to a single human heart. It mattered nothing that I was unable to return his attachment. It mattered little that my peace and gladness of mind were inevitably destroyed. My trust in my fellow-creatures was gently restored; and I was

visited by repose as soon as my natural grief was dispelled by time.

"It is singular," pursued Mrs. Digby, "that my father who left me his estate upon such strict conditions, left me totally unfettered in my future disposal of it. Having no near relations, my thoughts often reverted to Mr. Warrenne as the worthiest person of my acquaintance, to make my heir. But he was some years older than myself, and the chances were that I might be the survivor. Meantime, after a lapse of years sufficient to content a vainer woman than myself, he married: and as time rolled on, I thought I would enquire into the characters of his children, and select from them the most amiable to be my successor. But here I was baffled—they were all amiable; all endowed with the high principles that their father had taken pains to inculcate. And still time slipped away; and I might have died intestate, if circumstances had not thrown you in my way, and decided my choice at once."

Leonard's astonishment almost took from him the power of utterance; he faltered some thing about his entire unworthiness to be so distinguished.

"With regard to our meeting on that terrible day," said Mrs. Digby, "although I should have ever felt grateful to you for your kindness, it would not alone have decided me on the step I am now taking; but you see that my principal reasons refer to affairs which took place before your birth, and for which you are no way answerable: and let me tell you it is for my own contentment that I appoint an heir who has been brought up to my liking, and who does no discredit to his bringing up.

"And now," she added, interrupting his deep-felt expressions of gratitude, I must have my own way in certain particulars. It does not please me that my heir should derive his only advantages from my death; nor that he should step from a limited sphere of employment to the management of a large estate. I

wish, therefore, that Mr. Warrenne should withdraw you from your present occupation, and send you to travel for two or three years. I should be glad that you spent some time in Italy and improved your taste in poetry and art. I have a horror of country squires! And now Mr. Leonard as I am not quite strong yet, I shall turn you out for to-day."

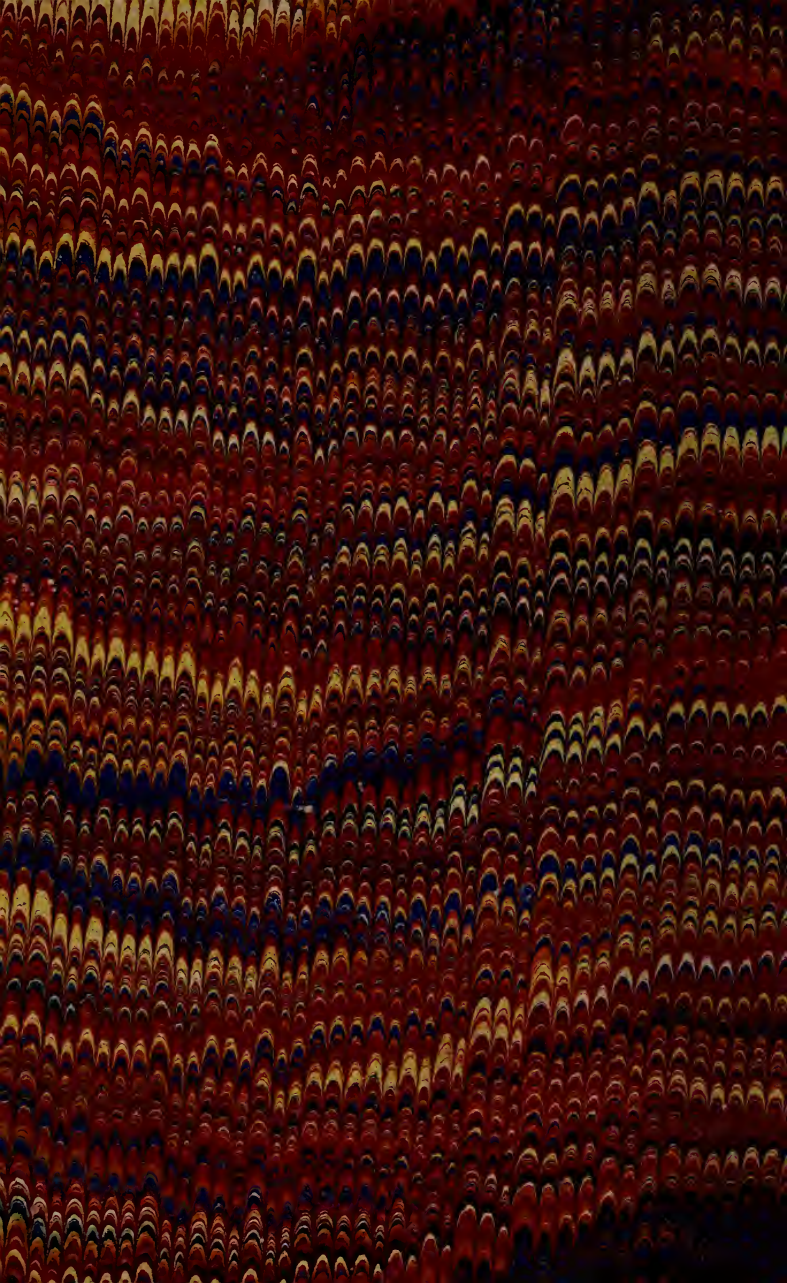
Leonard rode home bewildered by the change in his prospects, nor could he really believe his good fortune, until his father came from Mrs. Digby's, deeply penetrated with her generosity; and informed him that she had taken legal measures to secure him her property, and had insisted on making him an allowance during her life, which would enable him with ease to carry out his plans of travelling when and where he pleased. She wished that her intentions with respect to Leonard should not be mentioned beyond his own family—not caring to have her affairs canvassed all over the county sooner than could be helped, and she

suggested that Leonard should make his health the plea for withdrawing from Mr. Thomason's, and going to the south of Europe.

Of course, the consequence was that his daily visits to Forrel Court were set down to a sudden fancy on the part of Mrs. Digby to bestow her hand upon Leonard. The young man was pronounced a knave and a hypocrite, and the old lady a very improper sort of woman.

END OF VOL I.

OSTELL, PRINTER, HART STREET, BLOOMSBURY.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 056523621